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THE SINGER'S HANDBOOK

THE SINGER'S HANDBOOK

LAZAR S. SAMOILOFF

Recordings demonstrating the exercises in this
book have been prepared by the author and may
be ordered directly from the Samoiloff Studios.

Set of three records . . \$5.00

The Samoiloff Bel Canto Studios and Opera Academy
610 South Van Ness Avenue
Los Angeles, California

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THE AUTHOR GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE
ASSISTANCE OF HIS DAUGHTER ZEPHA, AND HIS FRIENDS,
JULIETTE LAINE AND RICHARD DRAKE SAUNDERS,
IN THE PREPARATION OF
THIS WORK

PRELUDE

EVERYBODY sing, now!

Come on, take a deep breath and

What's that? . . . You don't sing? . . . You don't know how?

Nonsense! Everybody sings, whether they know how or not, so that shouldn't stop you! Besides, you can learn how, quickly and painlessly.

Singing—whether at the Metropolitan Opera or merely in the family bathtub—can do so much for you in the way of health and beauty, improvement in your speaking voice, and the psychological uplift that an interesting hobby always gives. So much indeed, that there's no excuse for anyone's vocal light being hidden under bushels of inertia or shyness.

Yes, everybody sings. And everybody talks. Yet very few persons sing or talk really well. Why not? Surely the fact that one is singing or speaking for fun instead of for a salary check should not excuse one's shortcomings! Why not do one's very best? In many cases latent ability may prove quite surprising. There have been numerous notable examples of singers whose voices were discovered by accident.

But if the hope of being a great singer doesn't intrigue you, you are still not relieved of the responsibility of making the most of your voice, for no matter upon what plane you live in either the social or business world you will go farther, and faster, if your speaking voice is one of distinction and charm. A cultivated voice, correctly modulated and smoothly produced because properly "placed" acts as an important passport to respectful attention anywhere, and under all circumstances. And, *such a voice can be acquired.*

Therefore, gentle reader, whether you intend using your voice for fame or for fun, this book is for you.

For the serious student who contemplates a professional career I present eleven chapters of instruction and sound advice. I have also prepared a series of phonograph records which will serve to clarify various points, and which may be purchased separately and used to supplement the text of this book, if desired.

In my endeavor to simplify much of the mystery which surrounds the study of singing I have omitted, insofar as possible, all technical and scientific terminology, and for this reason I feel confident that the person of, may I say, "lesser aspirations," will be able to derive equal benefit therefrom. The records too should be used by both types of student, for it is fully as important for the speaker to keep to the correct path of tone placement as for the singer to do so.

As for that innocent bystander, the person who neither sings nor speaks, but enjoys hearing the other fellow, may his perusal of this little road map give him a clearer understanding of the myriad problems and difficulties of the professional, for with such understanding he will find ever-increasing enjoyment in performances still to come. Moreover, psychologists are agreed that a person lacking executant or creative ability may still be suitable for musical education. Such persons, despite their seeming lack of talent, may nevertheless have such a deep love of music, so keen a sensitiveness to it, as to amount to a talent, and may therefore derive immense benefit from the proper opportunities for study.

L. S. S.

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THE SINGER'S HANDBOOK

CHAPTER ONE

HAVE YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES?

*Self-analysis . . . The student's two most important qualifications
. . . The fallacy of the big, natural voice . . . The ideal voice*

A WORRIED father said to me one day, "Do you think my son should study singing? I know he has a good voice, but there are so many singers who don't seem able to make a living . . ." and his voice trailed off in anxious doubt.

True, there are thousands of singers who cannot make a living. There are also a vast number of others who make far more than a good living. It is just as true now as it ever was that "there is always room at the top" for those of top calibre. But there is also room on the lower rungs of the ladder, perhaps more nowadays than ever before, for those who are not of stellar calibre; and many a singer who cannot aspire to the Metropolitan can nevertheless make a comfortable living and a satisfactory career in one of the lesser fields of music, such as church work, radio, or motion pictures.

Thus, to the student's query, "What is there in it for me?" the reply remains the same as it has always been, simply: "It depends on what you have to give."

We don't expect a pianist to play an elaborate concerto without sufficient preparation. We know there are long years of dull, uninteresting scales, finger exercises and grinding drudgery behind his brilliant performance, and the voice demands the same thorough cultivation. Therefore, it is annoying to the conscientious teacher to have a pupil ask, usually after his first lesson, how soon he can start "making money."

All teachers know that many students are in dire need of money;

we know too that it is only natural that one should wish to know approximately how soon any undertaking may be completed. Nevertheless, it is impossible for any teacher to promise definitely: "You will be ready to sing in public and make money in six months. . . or six years."

Besides the actual mechanical difficulties of a certain number of hours of practice, there are personal, individual difficulties to be encountered in each case. No two voices respond physically in exactly the same degree in any given length of time, and no two pupils ever react in the same way to the same instruction. Every voice and every mentality requires a different grouping of rules, instructions, and encouragement.

Before a student asks his teacher, "When will I be ready?" he had better ask himself, "How great is my capacity for study, my aptitude for memorizing, for understanding directions, for concentration? Besides voice, do I possess musicianship, personality, a sense of showmanship? Do I have any special quality that will help me 'go over' with the public?"

In analyzing our possibilities we must do so in careful consideration of the goal we hope to reach. The singing world has broadened and is enlarging day by day: opera, oratorio, concert, radio, motion pictures, recording, and presently television. Step by step these media have evolved, opening new fields and calling for highly developed and specialized talents, as well as for young and interesting personalities.

The public taste has altered drastically in the past two decades, and it no longer admires the hefty prima donna of yesteryear. It has turned instead to the petite, streamlined singer of today. From the tenor with the high C and the paunch to the crooner who tugs at his fans' heartstrings with his maudlin dirge of self-pity is a far cry, but it demonstrates with perhaps cruel clarity the vast difference in standards (insofar as the paying public is concerned) of today and yesterday.

Not that the crooner or the personality singer has supplanted the operatic or concert artist in the esteem of the true music lover. That is, of course, absurd and impossible. He has, nevertheless, by personality and the knowledge of how to "sell" a song (despite his lack of voice), set up a new phase of artistic standard which the better singer needs must follow. In other words, voice alone will no longer assure any singer a career. No matter how fine the vocal organ may be, or how beautifully cultivated, it must be aided and abetted by keen intelligence, a gracious personality, an attractive appearance, and an excellent business sense.

In developing an artist I base my hopes upon two all-important fundamentals. I ascertain, first of all, the student's personal attitude toward the matter. Does he contemplate studying merely to please a fond parent or perhaps to impress certain friends? Is he influenced largely by the fact that first class singers' salaries run into four figures? Or does he want to study because music is the very breath of life to him, and any other field of work would be utterly unthinkable?

Too many people believe that the work they are attracted to is naturally the work they should do. This is a deplorable and sometimes tragic error. To admire something and wish to engage therein is not enough. Nor is it enough that we choose a career merely because it would please our parents or someone dear to us. This is an admirable motive, of course, but it will not suffice. At least not if the career is to be one in music. Tepid interest and mild enthusiasm will achieve nothing. It is only when we are driven by an overwhelming desire, an urge that sweeps all else before it and that will find no sacrifice or hardship too great, that we achieve our goal. If the student is motivated by anything other than such fiercely burning ambition, he must not expect to make a musical career. It is this inner fire which is the student's finest qualification, and it is what I call true "talent."

His second vitally important asset is personality. This is not determined by a pretty face or a superficial charm of manner. Per-

sonality lies far deeper than that and is an integral part of that inner fire I speak of in the preceding paragraph. It is a quality which cannot be assumed or simulated, and I would describe it as a tremendous, compelling sincerity. Such quality of sincerity radiates from a person spontaneously, unconsciously, and impresses us immediately.

This quality, I repeat, has nothing in common with the synthetic charm or emotionalized gush which so many persons affect, and which deceives no one. To attain artistic greatness the singer's personality must hold warmth and tenderness, an all-embracing sympathy and understanding. He must be able to sing the simplest folk song with such poignant feeling that it will hold his audience as spellbound as would the most elaborate *aria*. "Only that which comes from the heart will go to the heart" is an old saying, and in nothing is this demonstrated more clearly than in music.

By this time the reader will probably be wondering why I have said nothing about the importance of the singer's having a big, natural voice?

I reply that I have intentionally relegated the matter of voice to secondary consideration because, in my estimation, that is where it belongs. The two qualities I have outlined above are so much more important to the singer than his purely vocal equipment that they merit first place. In fact, without them, the finest voice ever created would achieve nothing.

All musically uninformed persons overrate the importance of the "big, natural voice." It is not, as a rule, the big, natural voice which makes the most brilliant career. On the contrary, some of the most illustrious careers have been made by singers with very small, but correctly trained, voices. In every chorus, in every church choir, we find big voices which will never go any farther because their owners imagine that size and volume will compensate for whatever else may be lacking. Volume is *not* all-important. Neither is range.

Every day fond mothers come to me and announce, "My daughter can sing high C!" As though that were a miracle! "Why not?" I reply. "So can 'most everyone else!" Or else they tell me that the wonder-child can sing the F above the high C, "and in fortissimo!" To which I again reply, "Why not? So can the fishmonger, whose voice we can hear from the top floor of the highest apartment house! He has range and volume too, madame, but that is not *art*." It is not the pitch but the *quality*, the careful training that the voice displays, which makes a voice one of beauty and value.

If a student has the two primary qualifications previously outlined, the inner fire and complete, absolute sincerity, all else can be acquired. With proper training I can add as many as five tones to the voice of limited range. Resonance and volume are created by proper use of the natural resonance chambers and correct breath management. Flexibility, once the tone is properly placed, is merely a matter of practice, while the quality itself can be so completely changed, as the result of correct training, that even a harsh, unpleasant voice can develop into one of excellent color and charm.

Many students fail to estimate correctly the importance of musicianship. It is a vital part of every singer's equipment, but it can be acquired, and need not be regarded as a special dispensation from heaven, granted to a favored few. A fine sense of rhythm, an accurate ear, the ability to read music, all the qualities that make up musicianship can be learned and perfected. Three or four hours a day spent in sightreading and kindred studies will make a good musician of any serious student. That is why in my studios I have classes for these subjects, as well as those for voice training and repertoire.

Beauty of voice, with the utmost in tonal freedom and flexibility, is the great objective toward which every singer and teacher is ceaselessly striving. Yet despite this apparent unity of purpose we find, upon investigation, that hardly any two singers or teachers agree upon any method as being the one true and infallible one. On the

contrary, we discover that there are almost as many methods as there are teachers.

Surely it is an indisputable fact that the ideal method of instruction is that which gives the singer the requisite vocal technique, with all that the phrase implies—beauty of tone, range, volume, and flexibility—in the shortest possible time and with the least possible effort!

Naturally, every conscientious teacher believes his own method to be excellent, and perhaps it is, as far as it goes. But the one indisputable proof of any teacher's method is the number of students who sing the better for having studied with him.

In attempting to describe a method, however excellent, one runs into difficulties, for the competent teacher handles each voice in the manner best suited to help that particular pupil. Every student is an individual problem, psychologically as well as vocally, and requires specialized instruction. Strictly speaking, the teacher has, or should have, a different method for each pupil. *His basic principles remain always the same*, but their application is highly variable and must be adjusted to the needs of the individual student. This is especially true when the student presents a voice impaired by previous faulty training, with its resultant discouragement and loss of confidence. In such cases the teacher is in a position analogous to that of the physician, the success of whose treatment depends primarily upon a correct diagnosis. It is hardly necessary to add that only expert skill and a broad experience will equip him to handle such delicate and diversified problems.

The fact that a teacher is expensive is no guarantee of his worth. Naturally those of fine reputation charge more for their services than do those who are not well known, but it is up to the student himself to gauge whether he is getting his money's worth in tuition, or not. Certainly he could make no greater mistake than to study with a certain teacher merely because his prices were lower than those of others.

Too many otherwise intelligent persons imagine that any teacher will do to give a pupil the fundamentals, and that later, just prior to his debut, he can take half a dozen lessons with some really first class teacher. Incorrect instruction at the beginning will delay the student's progress for years, and may cost him his voice altogether.

In my lecture-tours I frequently make the statement that I can improve the average trained singer's voice in two minutes. When the incredulous and oft-times indignant gasps of the audience have subsided I ask for volunteers to come to the platform. They are always forthcoming. And then the fun begins. But I am happy to say that the audience's invariable applause at the end of my impromptu demonstration is gratifying proof that I have made good my boast. That this happens in every instance, any time, anywhere, is due to the fact that nine singers out of ten either neglect, or have never been taught, a few of the most fundamental rules of good singing.

Briefly, these rules are as follows:

First: *The tone must have body.* This is acquired only by correct breathing, i. e., breath control and *support*.

Second: The singer's body must be perfectly controlled, yet so relaxed that the tone can *flow* easily, without being pushed or driven. Incidentally, *laxness is not relaxation*.

Third: Every tone sung must be formed mentally and *placed* so accurately that it will be round, mellow, and have sufficient resonance and carrying power, whether sung fortissimo, mezzo voce, or pianissimo.

Generally speaking, the ideal voice is one that is resonant, colorful, and flexible. It floats easily, without strain, is of good range, and has sufficient agility to allow the artist full interpretive freedom. The ideal voice is always correctly placed or "in focus," just as a good photograph is always in proper focus, without blur or "fuzziness"; and always, in such a voice, every tone matches every other tone in a smooth vocal line.

A voice with definite breaks in it, here and there a nasal quality or a white, open sound, a tendency to sharp or flat, a thick or muffled

tone, or a tremolo, is highly objectionable to the cultured ear. A correct method of singing will eliminate all such disturbing qualities and will frequently reveal unexpected beauty and much charm.

A serious stumbling block in the path of many singers is their apparent feeling that a passable technique is their principal or most important attainment. Granted that vocal technique is of vital importance, there are still the matters of musicianship, interpretive ability, repertoire, languages, personality, and stage presence to be reckoned with. Each of these is a vital factor in his ultimate success. True, some singers have reached the top in certain fields of song even though they lacked one of the aforementioned assets, but should any singer of the present day lack more than one of them he would be fatally handicapped.

The golden age of singing is not over. Instead, the public demands more of its vocal artists today than ever before. One result is that the average singer, having heard so much about the importance of personality and showmanship, concentrates too much upon developing these assets and neglects his purely vocal artistry. This is a sad mistake, for all these qualities must be present if our discriminating present-day audiences are to accept an artist.

In return, the singer who will truly prepare himself will find ample outlet, and a greater financial reward, than ever before. He will also have the satisfaction of knowing that he is singing to a more musically intelligent audience than did the majority of his predecessors, and this, to the true artist, is a tremendous satisfaction and joy, and compensates fully for all the work, the hopes and fears, the griefs and disappointments, that his career has cost him.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RIGHT TEACHER

Selecting a teacher . . . How to judge . . . The mechano-physiological school . . . The "natural" method . . . Fallacy of "natural" singing . . . The old Italian method . . . Correct voice placement

THE problem of finding the right teacher is the most important one that any student faces, for the success of his future career will depend in great measure upon his having acquired a fine and dependable foundation. What complicates the problem is the unfortunate fact that, while there are innumerable teachers—good, bad, and indifferent—the beginner is rarely able to judge one from the other, or to choose the one who would be best for him.

Personally, I feel that only a teacher who has himself been a professional singer should be considered. We do not go to a cornetist for piano lessons, nor to a violinist if we wish to play the flute. Then why go to an organist or an ex-accompanist for vocal lessons? Everything pertaining to tone production, placement, resonance, attack, breath control, and all the myriad other matters that make up good singing *must* be shown the student by personal demonstration; he cannot acquire them by abstract theorizing. Surely, then, it is beyond argument that only a teacher who is or was himself a singer is competent to offer such instruction!

I attribute my own successful career as a teacher to the fact that I had this all-important background. I not only received my training in music from the finest master of my day, but this was augmented by actual experience on the operatic and concert stages of Europe. Later, in addition to my work as teacher, I held the post of music critic for over thirty years—ten years in Russia and twenty in

New York—during which time I witnessed every operatic performance of note and heard every important concert artist as well, and thus familiarized myself thoroughly with the finest of accepted musical tradition in both these fields.

Usually a student chooses a certain teacher because he has heard one of that teacher's pupils and has been favorably impressed by him. A good idea, as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. Since the outsider has rarely any way of knowing whether the singer he so admires learned all that he knows from that particular teacher, or whether he acquired it bit by bit from half a dozen others, he cannot permit himself to be influenced unduly by that singer's performance, however excellent.

Too many singers, artists as well as students, have the misleading habit of attributing their best qualities to whatever teacher they happen to be studying with at the moment. All that his predecessor taught them is forgotten or ignored. Some even go so far as to proclaim that they've never had a singing lesson in their lives and are entirely self-taught. (When one famous coloratura made this absurd statement to a music critic recently, that gentleman replied, "I don't doubt it, madame. Your singing proves it!")

On the other hand, the fact that a teacher was once a famous singer is no guarantee that he is a good teacher. The mental or psychological make-up of some persons is such that, no matter how expert they may be in their own field of work, they have not the ability to impart their knowledge. The ability to teach is a very special quality and is not granted to everyone. We must remember also that there are excellent as well as mediocre voices to be found in every studio, and no teacher should be judged by his exceptionally good or exceptionally poor students. The singer who impresses us may be that teacher's only worthwhile pupil or he may be singing well not because he is studying with that teacher but *despite* that fact.

We often find a teacher whose success with a single pupil gives

him a considerable, though temporary, prestige. This is particularly the case with teachers who discover and exploit a very youthful singer. Sometimes it is a child with an amazing range and a beauty of tone that is distinctly mature and "professional." Naturally the teacher receives full credit for the little girl or boy's vocal achievements, and myriad mothers bring their own children for instruction, to say nothing of all the older students who feel that this teacher will do as much for them as he has for the wonder-child. Yet time goes on without the desired results.

Why? Why is it that a teacher who apparently could do so much for an untrained child can do little or nothing with older and presumably more intelligent students? Why does he have one, *and only one*, successful pupil?

The answer is heartbreakingly simple, and can be explained briefly as follows: *The wonder-child's voice was naturally placed.* This is by no means an infrequent condition. We often find children whose voices have the requisite point and focus by accident, or by nature, just as some persons have the gift of absolute pitch, or an infallible sense of rhythm. Having this correct placement by nature, almost any sort of training will serve to develop it, up to a certain point and for a limited period of time. Later, inexpert training begins to tell on the delicate vocal mechanism and the voice deteriorates. Later still, it will become wholly useless.

Certainly it must be apparent, to even the most unscientific mind, that it is the child's unusual natural gifts which are responsible for her success, rather than the training she has received. If not, why is she her teacher's *only* outstanding pupil, and why cannot he do for any of the others what he apparently did so easily for her?

Singing is a physical act and as such must be thoroughly and scientifically understood *by the teacher*, but not *necessarily* by the pupil. For the pupil who learns best by imitation, the teacher should be able to impart the physiological principles in so simple and understandable a manner, and should be able to illustrate *with his own*

voice the various tonal qualities of both correctly and incorrectly produced tones, and *why* they are right or wrong, that the pupil will be enlightened instead of bewildered. The pupil must be taught the *sound* of correctly produced tones, and because many learn more easily by imitation than by any other way it is imperative, I repeat, that the teacher be able to furnish a model or example.

Many zealots of the mechano-physiological school, unable to personally demonstrate their theories, have recourse to absurd mechanical devices which are supposed to assist the student. One pupil told me of a teacher who insisted upon his students' wearing a certain patent belt while practicing. This was a kind of flexible yardstick with a dial which measured the inspiration and expiration of breath. When the dial turned to a certain number, it indicated that the breath and the tone had been good. If it did not reach this number, the tone was wrong. Another told of a teacher who made pupils sing while standing with their heels on a strip of wood and their toes on the floor. This was to assist in acquiring their top notes! Another required his students to sing their exercises while walking the length of the room with their arms held up above their heads. This was "to take the weight off the chest!"

Then, too, we remember the amusing scene in the film "One Night of Love," in which Grace Moore lay flat on the floor with several heavy volumes piled on her stomach. According to the vocal teacher in the film, she would approach her goal as a singer when she could lift the whole stack of books with her diaphragm. I dare say most of the audience thought this bit of nonsense was sheer burlesque, yet I have heard of many presumably reputable teachers who taught just such absurdities. Granted that the principle involved is usually a sensible one, the method of attainment is too often ludicrous.

In direct contrast to the mechano-physiological school is that group of teachers who preach the "natural" method, sometimes dubbed the "sing-like-the-birdies-sing" method. Instead of believing that the more one knows of the physical construction of the vocal

organs and the muscular processes involved in singing the better, these persons swing to the opposite extreme and insist that the less we know of such things, and the more we adhere to a purely imaginary method, the more beautifully will we sing. Many teachers say:

“Think only of a beautiful tone, and forget everything else. Singing is spiritual and mental. If we think of a perfect and beautiful tone, the vocal mechanism will unconsciously function, instantly and accurately, to produce that tone.”

It's as simple as that. Or isn't it?

If it is, why isn't the world filled with the most glorious singers ever heard? Everyone wants to sing, and almost everyone does. Then why aren't the results wholly different from what they are?

The erroneous reasoning of the above-mentioned school is based upon the mistaken premise that the act of singing is fundamentally natural, simple, and easy to perform.

Unfortunately, such is not the case.

To make a fairly pleasant sound within the limited compass of our speaking voice—a range of from four or five tones to perhaps an octave—may pass for singing at home or in a circle of friends, but that is not the kind of singing which we are now considering.

The kind of singing with which this book has to do, and which the student must acquire in order to achieve a career, is so wholly different that this difference must be obvious even to the musically uninformed.

Let us consider briefly the chief points of this difference.

Firstly, there is the matter of range. Instead of the half-dozen tones which the untrained person uses, the vocal range of the professional singer should embrace from two to three octaves (sixteen to twenty-four diatonic tones). Each of these tones must match in color and quality, and the infinite variations thereof, of every other tone. They must be as uniform in smoothness and texture as a perfectly matched string of pearls. A voice cannot be permitted to

have a few strong tones and a few weak ones, a few good ones and a few bad ones. Whether the singer sings in full voice, half voice, or lightest pianissimo, he must have a perfectly even scale.

Secondly, instead of the shallow, top-of-the-lungs breathing which suffices the average person, the professional singer must train his muscles to respond instantly to the demand for deep, diaphragmatic breathing, and must be able to control such breath with utmost exactitude, whether pouring it forth in a torrent of sound or spinning it out in a threadlike tone of gossamer fineness.

Most important of all, he must learn to place and focus his tone, regardless of its pitch, so precisely as to make full use of the resonance chambers of his head, thereby assuring a tone not only of roundly brilliant quality, but one which will "carry" and be heard in the farthest rows of the largest auditorium or opera house.

The "home" singer with the "natural" voice need not learn to do any of these things, but for the professional they are imperative. And not one of them is "natural"! Each comes only after constant and painstaking practice. The singer, unlike the instrumentalist, actually builds and develops his instrument at the same time that he is learning to play upon it.

This being the case, I repeat that singing is not, at its best, a "natural" thing; it is a fine art.

Even if it were possible for one to sing a correctly formed tone merely by holding the thought of a perfect tone in mind, we are faced by the discouraging fact that not one person in a hundred recognizes a perfect tone when he hears it. Only the experienced ear, the trained musical intelligence, knows what qualities the correctly formed tone has, and *why*. The musically uneducated differ radically, and vehemently, in their concepts of how an ideal tone is produced. A loud noise, a tinny, shrill whine, a pinched or throaty sound, a tremolo, or a truly correct and beautiful tone, one and all are acceptable to the uninformed—if they don't have to pay to hear it. How then shall the student-beginner, unless he springs from a fine musical

environment, recognize the differences in tone and distinguish the good from the bad?

When we couple this ignorance of tone quality with the fact that the student does not hear his own voice exactly as it sounds to others, we can readily understand why the hit-and-miss "natural" method of tone production has destroyed so many voices and ruined so many budding careers. It is one thing to sing as the birdies sing, but quite another to master the intricacies of Verdi, Wagner, and Puccini, and to sing these works with orchestral accompaniment, in a foreign language, in a modern hall or opera house!

The third and only bona-fide method of voice production is that which has come down to us from the old Italian masters and which combines all the best points of the latter school with that modern knowledge of the vocal mechanism given us by the medical experts and throat specialists of the present day.

The exponent of this school explains to the student very briefly, and very simply, how the diaphragm, vocal cords, and resonance chambers are used. The student is told how to stand, how to relax, and how to breathe. His first lessons are simple, for if he is given too much to bear in mind at the beginning he will become confused and worried. Moreover, the art of tone-production is, fundamentally, extremely simple, and the rules laid down for the student at the beginning never vary. How fast the student will progress will depend entirely upon his own intelligence and capacity for work.

Although basically simple, the laying of this foundation is rarely easy. Even the naturally gifted student usually will concentrate upon only one thing at a time, and will repeatedly make the same mistakes. This is true particularly when the pupil is one who has been studying a different method. Habits which have been worked into the voice are difficult to eradicate; the teacher can only repeat, again and again, the principles he is trying to establish. Eventually they will be assimilated.

Acting on the assumption that we progress much faster if we un-

derstand the mechanism we are working with, the exponents of this school explain, with charts and diagrams if need be, the physiological actions involved in singing. Thus the student learns a set of principles which work *every* time they are applied, not just once in a while, or when he happens to be in good voice. At no time are gadgets called into play to determine his breath control, no stack of books is piled upon his midriff, nor does he stand with heels upon a strip of wood to make sure of his top C.

What is meant by voice placement? It means the method by which a correct sound is produced. It is the foundation for all good singing and implies purity, brilliance, and beauty of tone. It means perfect mental and physical co-ordination, without which an adequate singing technique is impossible. When this co-ordination is achieved, and the student's vocal apparatus carries out the mental orders given it, the result will be a voice that is resonant, mellow and clear, always on pitch, and able to perform with ease and grace any song or aria that lies within its normal range.

Before a student can sing a song the voice must have developed sufficient flexibility, via the proper exercises, to meet the various technical demands of that song. There are voices, although they are rare, which have a naturally correct placement. Their owners, without having studied, sing with a good tone quality and much charm, under certain favorable conditions. But unless a singer has been correctly trained, so that he has an adequate and fully understood technique upon which he can rely with perfect confidence, any sudden mental stress, any physical strain, any untoward circumstance may disturb him so badly as to completely incapacitate him.

Every teacher of singing wishes his pupils to acquire this vocal technique by his particular method, which he, quite naturally, feels is superior to all other methods. But, as I mentioned before, there are almost as many methods as there are teachers, and even though many of these methods are basically sound, they fail of the desired result for one or more of these three reasons:

- a. The teacher's ear is not sufficiently keen to detect the fault in the tone and the fundamental cause thereof.
- b. The teacher's method is difficult, complicated, or basically incorrect as to the mental or physical processes of singing.
- c. The teacher is wholly unable to impart whatever knowledge he has. One may know a subject thoroughly and yet be unable to present it in such a manner that the pupil will learn quickly or easily. Teaching is a highly specialized profession. A kindly, ever-encouraging manner, unlimited patience, and endless perseverance must accompany a complete knowledge of the subject.

Too few teachers are able to diagnose correctly the cause of their students' difficulties. One may work for years with such a teacher without the slightest progress, simply because the teacher is unable to understand the reason for the difficulty and to correct it. I remember a soprano who once came to me, explaining that after years of study she had abandoned hope of a career because she had an incurable tremolo. None of her teachers had even mentioned it to her, obviously because they had no idea how to correct it. When I showed her that her breathing was at fault and that with proper diaphragmatic breath-control her tone would become smooth and firm her gratitude was pathetic.

Another singer told me that for years she had worried over her inability to sing *pianissimo*. Her first teacher had dismissed the question with a shrug of the shoulders and the vague comment that "it was nothing to worry about." Another had replied that "it was a matter of practice and would come with the passing of time." Another had the effrontery to tell her that since her voice was a very light one at best she had no need to worry, for even her *forte* was little more than *pianissimo*!

Fortunately this student had the intelligence to see through these evasive answers and to recognize the ignorance that prompted them. But what of those students who either because of a false sense of respect for their teachers, or a too humble opinion of their own judgment, accept unquestioningly all such preposterous statements?

Good old-fashioned common sense is at all times of vital importance to the student and at no time does it prove of greater value than in coping with just such dilemmas. Only the highly intelligent student will realize when he is being correctly trained and when he is being "taught" by someone who knows even less than he does. The others will plod along, somehow, until the voice is completely wrecked.

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT TONE

*Varieties of wrong tone . . . The origin of the Bel Canto Method
. . . Focus, point, resonance . . . Registers*

ALTHOUGH the average opera or concert audience holds a comparatively small percentage of cultured, or shall we say "musically sophisticated," persons, the rest of the audience, although musically untrained, has nevertheless very definite ideas regarding what it does and does not like. Ask the average listener what he dislikes about an artist and he will tell you point blank that he doesn't like:

- Singer A—because he sounds throaty.
- " B—because he has a nasal twang.
- " C—has a tremolo or quaver in his voice.
- " D—sings off key too often.
- " E—has a colorless, uninteresting voice.
- " F—yells too much; sings everything full voice.
- " G—lacks expression and drags everything as though it were a dirge.
- " H—scoops up to each tone, his attack not clean-cut.
- " I—clears his throat too frequently.
- " J—sounds as if he had two or three different voices.
- " K—"Just doesn't appeal to me!"

What he does like, invariably, is the voice that is round, mellow, smoothly produced, and with every tone squarely on pitch. The voice that seems to be produced with ease and grace, that is used with assurance, and whose technique is so perfect that the singer never think only of the song's interpretation and emotional values, that is the voice that gives pleasure both to the trained listener and to the one who merely "knows what he likes."

But even though the student thinks he knows the kind of tone he should and would like to sing, and feels that his teacher also knows and is competent to teach him, there is a long weary road ahead of him.

There are hundreds of variations of tone. Some tones just miss the correct focus. Some contain too nasal a quality. Some tones have almost correct focus yet miss perfection because they are muffled and not sufficiently resonant. The problem depends upon the teacher for its solution, for it is he who must be able to hear these infinitesimal differences in quality and strive to develop a similarly acute ear in the student.

Needless to say, the teacher must always, in listening to a voice in a small room, be able to gauge just how that voice will sound in a large auditorium. (Incidentally, I always wonder how those teachers who teach the constantly soft tone, the small *pianissimo*, expect this pinched, restrained tone to cope with the ordeal of an orchestral accompaniment and a large hall. Or are their singers going to sing their entire careers with benefit of microphone?)

Perhaps to the sports-minded I could explain my point in terms of sport. For instance, in golf we all know that the object of the game is to get our ball down the fairway and into the cup in as few strokes as possible. We also know that there is such a thing as a swing in perfect form—a swing that, because of the perfect co-ordination, relaxation, and easy effort of the body, propels the ball as far as the player's strength will allow.

We know that all these things are true, yet how many of us attain this perfect form, this absolute co-ordination? What do we lack? What do we need? Every golf professional or teacher will tell us it is something else. One insists that if the shoulder is kept low we will attain perfect form. One declares if we pivot correctly all is well, another insists that it is the correct flick of the wrist we lack, and another says to simply keep the eye on the ball. Which is right? Aren't they all?

There appear to be hundreds of varieties of golf strokes, some of them far from beautiful. Some men hunch up over the ball and give it a terrible swat and—Wham! It goes! Another stands as far away as possible and cocking his head to one side, after a bit of nervous twitching, takes a half-way swing and again—Wham! It goes! If these men were stopped suddenly from using these ungainly habits they would lose all their ability. Although they themselves would be the first to say that perfect form is the ideal they strive for, they would be highly indignant if one were to point out to them that their form doesn't even approximate the ideal. "What of it?" they would protest. They hit the ball, don't they? Of course, sometimes they don't hit it well, and sometimes they hit it to the right or to the left, and sometimes they are "off their form" and can't hit the ball at all, but isn't that a common fault?

They were taught a certain method, or at least they learned a certain method, although it might be far from what the teacher had intended, and they are sticking to it because they know it well, and if these men were to become teachers they would in turn pass on all their bad habits to their unsuspecting pupils.

In golf, however, it is only the good player, the professional who has at some time made good, who qualifies as an instructor. One wouldn't think of studying golf with a teacher who couldn't at least outdrive one. Yet in singing it is too often the singer who couldn't make good, or who has never sung at all and is not qualified to teach, who is permitted to pass on to his pupils the bad habits that held him back.

Despite the diversity of results achieved by the exemplars of the various schools and methods, one finds comfort and encouragement in the fact that ever so often one hears a singer who does know his business. Such a singer performs with beauty and ease, and his technique is such that he sings the same way all of the time. True, there may be occasions when he sings even better than is his usual wont, but never can it be said that because of a sudden indisposition

or because of unfamiliar surroundings, or inadequate rehearsal (the most usual alibis), he falls below his own high standard. Such a singer *never* falls below a certain standard; he sings always at a certain high level of excellence because he works upon a firm foundation, i.e., *a good method*.

All good singers agree that their goal, technically, is to bring the voice up and out, forward and high, covered and resonant.

Admittedly there are many and devious routes by which one can reach any one goal. For example, if your nose itches and you want to scratch it, do you wrap your arm around your neck in order to get your hand to your nose? Of course, you don't. You simply reach up and scratch. You don't go through unnecessary and awkward contortions in order to do anything that can be done more easily in a simple, direct manner.

So too in singing. The simplest, most direct method of developing the voice and its technical control is the old Bel Canto method.

Everyone has read the advertisements of teachers who announce the "genuine Bel Canto method" and most of us, knowing enough Italian to understand that the phrase means "beautiful singing," have wondered why some teachers seem to make a slogan of the phrase when one would suppose that *all* singing teachers taught *beautiful* singing.

As a matter of fact, the term Bel Canto has a specialized meaning in the world of music. It is the method of voice training evolved by the Italian choirmasters of the golden age, and originated in the following manner:

In those early days of musical culture (Fourth century, A.D.), singing was an important part of the Roman Catholic ritual, and the responsibility of teaching their choristers to sing beautifully fell upon the shoulders of the choirmasters. Apparently all concerned approached the problem with keen intelligence and co-operation, with results that were most gratifying. In those early days, however,

women were not permitted to sing in church, and all feminine parts in such choral singing were allotted to the young boys of the choir.

Unfortunately, the choirmasters found that after a few years of singing, and at a time when these boys had by training and experience become most valuable to them, their voices underwent a physical change that necessitated their temporary retirement.

Gradually, by experimentation, these early teachers of singing discovered that if the adolescent lads were trained to sing in falsetto voice they could continue singing during the entire period of vocal change, and could thus add several years to their professional lives.

Better still, these teachers discovered that the singers who had been trained to use the falsetto during their early youth retained something of this placement in their later work as tenors, basses, and baritones. Indubitably, this form of early training made the mature voice far more resonant and mellow, and compelled the conclusion that head resonance was closely related to falsetto, even though wholly dissimilar.

Acting upon this theory, they now specialized in teaching correct head resonance, and did so with such brilliant result that they discarded all other methods and from that time forth called this new teaching the "Bel Canto" method. Nowadays, when the term is correctly used, it still means the same thing, i.e., the properly placed voice, whose tones are all correctly focused or "pointed." Such placement eliminates the flat, colorless, or muffled tone, and eliminates as well the age-old problem of several registers in the same voice.

As you may have noticed, the untrained or badly trained singer usually will sing the lower phrases of a song in one kind of tone quality, change the placement completely for the middle passages, and for the top notes will use still another point of focus, thus utilizing as many as three different placements, or physical adjustments, during the course of one number. This, needless to say, is wholly wrong, for in artistic and correct singing every tone must match

and blend with every other tone, just as a string of pearls must be evenly matched in order to attain its fullest beauty and value. This point has been mentioned before, but it cannot be repeated too often or emphasized too much, for it is a matter of utmost importance. A vocal range that is jumbled and made up of unevenly matched tones is acutely distressing to the listener and betrays the inept singer more quickly than any other failing.

To attain this tonal match and vocal line there must be a degree of head resonance in *every* tone. From the lowest note to the highest, which in some instances of coloratura singing is actually a type of falsetto, every tone must be so placed that the voice will be uniform, ascending or descending its scale without perceptible change of placement.

As may be readily seen, there is nothing mysterious or complicated about the Bel Canto method, yet many mistakes have been perpetrated in its name. Perhaps the commonest of these mistakes is the general misinterpretation of the simple Italian phrase, "con la fronte." The old Italian teachers told their pupils to sing "with the forehead," directing the tone toward the forehead at the juncture of the nose, to attain the proper overtone. The simple phrase was frequently misunderstood as meaning to sing with the face, or front, and this in turn was supposed by some to mean the outer part of the mouth, or lips. This meant vocalizing with consonants placed before the vowels, such as mi-mi-mi, pi-ma-mo, etc., the singer endeavoring to form the tone on the lips.

This practice leads many a singer onto the rocks, for it can do great harm. *The lips do not, and can not, form a tone.* They must remain mobile at all times in order to aid pronunciation, but this must be *after* the tone has been formed and directed toward the forehead, where it acquires its resonance from the head cavities. Thus, let the reader bear in mind at all times that *any tone formed in or by the mouth alone will be either colorless, muffled, or both.*

Vowels are of vital importance in singing via the Bel Canto

method, but they do not need consonants before them to insure their correct placement. Italian is called the "language of song" because it contains so many open vowel sounds. The burden of singing must always be carried by the vowels. Consonants have their own importance and it is necessary that they be enunciated distinctly and properly, but swiftly, so that they present no opposition to the fact that one is singing on *legato* vowels. This point will be taken up more fully in a later chapter.

Those readers who have already had some instruction in singing will now be interested in learning to what extent the Bel Canto method, as I teach it, differs from the fundamentals they have been taught.

First let me say that while long years of experience and careful study have proved to me that this method will do most for a singer in the shortest possible time, there are many, many fine singers and teachers who arrive at the same goal via their own modification of the fundamental principles. This is not only natural, but inevitable, because of the many physical and mental differences in people. For example, one person may sing his high notes best while the mouth is in a smiling position, and another may obtain an equally correct and beautiful tone with the mouth held differently. One pupil gets correct placement by thinking of her tone "between the eyes," while another thinks of her tones as "coming out from the top of her head." Any method, to be successful, must be able to accommodate itself to all such individual differences.

Every experienced teacher realizes that each student requires personalized instruction; nevertheless I feel that much good may be accomplished by describing the various outstanding faults that appear in the voice, and, by giving the reader the basic method applicable to every voice, he may be able to eradicate those faults which he recognizes as his own.

To begin with, what do we mean by tone focus or point? Simply, we mean that a tone must be concentrated to a given central point

which gives it a clean-cut attack, keeps it exactly on pitch, and imbues it with the right quality. A tone that is lacking in these attributes is as wrong as is a photograph that is out of focus. Such a photograph is indistinct, blurred, and distorted. The same is true of such a tone.

The act of singing is a voluntary physical act of breathing and exhaling that breath so that the vocal cords vibrate and transform that breath into sound. As soon as the breath becomes sound the mental processes can change the character of that sound. The sound can be high or low, rounded or dull, depending on *where* the tone is allowed to vibrate, or whether it is allowed to vibrate in the body at all.

For example: Say "come over here" in your ordinary speaking voice. Now repeat the words in a high, shrill voice, and now in a low, hollow voice. You hear the difference, do you not? And you also *feel* a difference.

You "placed" your voice as you wished. And, as it is possible to place your speaking voice, so too is it possible to place your singing voice.

But what placement will give you the voice you desire? What sensation, or group of sensations, must you strive for in order to acquire a singing tone that can be modulated and manipulated as you wish? What placement will give your voice roundness, purity, brilliance?

The answer is: That placement which uses *all* the resonating cavities of the body as they are needed.

If you place your hand on your chest and speak or sing a very low tone, you will feel vibration in your chest. You will feel an inner vibration, and your hand will also feel an outer vibration.

Now place a finger lightly just at the spot where your nose and forehead meet, and speak or sing a high tone, trying to arch that tone up and out so that it seems to hit that spot (the juncture of nose and forehead). You will feel a sensation of vibration in that

spot. It may seem to spread across your forehead, but its center, or focal point, will be where your finger touches.

Now, relax for a moment and then open your mouth wide and say "ah" in the middle voice. Don't try for vibration in the chest or forehead; just say it or sing it. As you do so you will feel a vibration in your mouth, on the hard palate or roof of your mouth.

From these slight experiments you will have discovered that there are three resonating cavities in the body—chest, upper head, and mouth—and that all three can be used in singing. The correctly trained voice makes use of all three, as needed, but the incorrectly trained voice uses only one, or possibly two.

As the properly trained voice ascends the scale the chest resonance diminishes and the head resonance increases. The mouth resonance remains always, if the other resonances have been established, and requires little attention. But as the pitch of the voice rises higher and higher the head resonance increases until the very highest notes, especially in high voices, are almost entirely head resonance.

It must be understood, however, that this head resonance, even in the highest tones of a high voice, is *not falsetto alone*. A tone with head resonance, regardless of pitch, must always have "body." It must always have breath support, and it must be placed so that it can drop to any lower tone with utmost ease and no change in placement; likewise even the lowest tone must have its head resonance covering so that the highest tone can be reached without any physical readjustment or change of placement.

In brief, the sensation of head resonance, the vibration and focus of tone at the place where nose and forehead meet, *must never be lost*. No matter what the pitch or volume of tone, *forte*, *mezzo voce*, trembling with emotion or vibrant with joy, it must hold to its point at all times.

How can we recognize voices which do not have this point or focus? Commonest of these is the "white" or colorless voice. It is a dull, lifeless voice whose tones seem to have no "ping" or body to

them. Anyone can sing with this kind of tone quality; one has only to open the mouth a little and sing without directing the tone to any of the resonance chambers of the body. Although everyone can readily see the inferiority of such singing, many otherwise interesting singers whose technique is inadequate frequently lapse into this haphazard method of tone-production without being aware of it. The only way to avoid such infantile tone quality is to train the voice to *use head resonance on every tone*.*

Another type of incorrect tone is the muffled or hooty kind. This voice contains some degree of head resonance, yet compared to a correctly produced voice it is dull in color, lacking in point, and rarely permits the singer full range or control of dynamics. High notes taken with this placement, which uses much mouth resonance but little head resonance, always sound as though the singer were striving to push the tone up in order to reach the pitch, and just barely achieving it. Such tones always sound restrained and have none of the free, floating quality that makes the correctly placed voice such a joy to hear.

Sometimes a singer who has almost, but not quite, attained correct focus will try to make his voice larger by forcing. To strain or force the voice beyond its normal limits results in immediate loss of placement, and the resultant tones will be screamed forth in shrill white tones or will become strained and muffled. A fresh young voice may indulge in such forcing for a short time, but hoarseness and fatigue will result, and if such singing is continued for any appreciable length of time it will spell *fnis* to any hope of a career. This will be taken up in greater length in a later chapter.

The point I wish to make here is that while the voice is acquiring facility and working toward its goal of perfect head resonance in every tone, the singer must not be tempted to develop the size or volume of the tone. *Perfect placement must first be attained*. When this has been established the voice will of its own accord increase

* Records demonstrating these points are available.

incredibly in power and volume. Moreover, its range will be greatly increased, and the singer will also find that he can perform easily despite fatigue, colds, and minor illnesses.

There is no end to the work of voice placement. Besides the years of constant practice to make and keep every tone smooth and even, it is necessary to continue the enlarging and developing process just as long as the career is being pursued. The actual physical act of placing the voice correctly soon becomes automatic to the properly trained singer, and he will have such command of his voice that it will respond perfectly to his needs; nevertheless he must keep the mental picture of tone placement constantly in mind, and practice it continually, in order to maintain his own high standard.

CHAPTER FOUR

MORE ABOUT TONE

*Posture . . . Simple exercises for focus . . . Interpretation vs.
technique . . . Breath control*

FOR the beginner, posture in singing is vitally important. The operatic artist must naturally be able to sing in almost any position, as stage action calls for ease and graceful agility in a physical as well as vocal sense, but the student must learn correct platform posture first, before attempting acting or operatic action.

Since his deep breathing demands chest and diaphragmatic expansion, the singer must hold his body in such manner that this expansion is not hindered. This means that his body must be relaxed, erect, and controlled. His feet must be firmly placed—usually one is slightly forward in advance of the other—thus permitting his weight to be easily shifted without noticeable movement. Needless to say, the toes should not be turned out nor in. This may seem unimportant, yet we have all seen singers with feet turned out in such noticeable Charlie Chaplin attitude that one's sense of humor destroyed whatever effect the singer strove for vocally.

The singer's shoulders should be relaxed and remain so. Breathing should not place any strain upon them. The neck must always be relaxed, and often I ask students to move their heads easily from side to side, while vocalizing, to avoid tenseness or stiffness in the neck, throat, or facial muscles. The jaw must always be relaxed and flexible. It is only natural that the beginner, trying to think of innumerable things at once, should become rigid and tense. This rigidity, whatever its cause, must be overcome from the very first.

The head should not be tilted forward or back, up or down, to any

marked degree; neither should any jerkiness or exaggeration of posture be permitted. In a later chapter we will consider the arms, hands, etc., but for the beginner a relaxed poise is the vital consideration.

If the throat becomes sore or the face feels drawn and tense, the singer should realize that he is singing or speaking incorrectly. He must discover the cause and rectify it as quickly as possible. Singing for the beginner should be a mental effort; *if it involves physical strain it is wrong*. The correctly produced voice, whether singing or speaking, can perform for hours without bad effect; if strain is felt the method should be changed.

To become expert in placing the voice the tones must be both felt and heard, and we must learn to recognize whether the tone we make is all that it should be, or not. Since both hearing and understanding of vocal sensation grow keener the more we practice, the beginner should not feel disturbed if at first the voice seems to lack volume. We can hear ourselves least of all, and few people can co-ordinate so well that they can immediately arrive at the tonal sound and sensation they strive for.

It is for this reason that I recommend the use of my records. Each gives the student a perfect example of correct tone with which he can at all times compare his own. Moreover, since improvement in the singing voice inevitably results in similar improvement in the speaking voice I strongly urge the reader who is interested primarily in improving his *speaking* voice to make use of the records, and practice the exercises for placement, etc., just as diligently as if a singing career were his goal.

Let us, therefore, in order that we may more clearly see the difference between the correct and the incorrect tone, begin by singing quite simply and "naturally," as though we knew nothing at all about the technique of tone.

Beginning at a comfortable pitch, in the middle of the voice, sing "ah."

1. Sing it the first time in a lackadaisical way, with a flat-sounding "eah" sound.
2. Sing this same tone with the mouth rounded as though saying "hooh."*

Neither tone sounded right, did it? Neither tone had the *point* that we desired. But here is a simple exercise that will help you toward that point:

3. Sing these same tones, but on the first two notes sing the syllables "ah, ah," on the third syllable sing the sound "eng," with the mouth open, giving the "g" (as in *go*) full value, and on the fourth tone sing the sound "oaw," at the same time striving for the "oaw" to feel focused at the point where the nose and forehead meet.*

What happens? As you sang the number one exercise, "eah," in a white, flat tone, the voice sounded entirely back in the throat. It was muffled and lacked resonance. In the second experiment, the "hooooooh" tones got their entire resonance in the mouth and besides sounding a little owlish, they were muffled and dull. But the third experiment, if you did the exercise correctly, directed the tone into the resonating cavities of the head, because as you sang the syllable "eng," the passage at the back of the throat was closed for a second, and the tone sung on the "oah" could not escape through the mouth alone, but was gently driven into the head resonance cavities, where it acquired the focus and the carrying power, as well as roundness, that you desire!

Although the air is directed *through* the nose the tone is never *in* the nose, nor is it nasal. It is *above* the nose, coming *through* the nose. There is absolutely no similarity between a nasal sound, which is extremely ugly, and a tone with point or head resonance, which is the ideal of the singing voice.

There are any number of variations of the "eng-oah" exercise, all of them helpful in gaining the "point" needed in every voice. They

* A record demonstrating these points is available.

will be found in the chapter devoted to vocalises for every voice, with directions for their use.

It is very probable that the singer who is not practiced in using head tone, and the beginner who has never either breathed very deeply or used the head resonating cavities, will have an unpleasant sensation of dizziness just at first. The reason for this is that the combination of unaccustomed oxygen taken into the lungs when the beginner is told to take a deep breath, plus the directing of the sound waves to the forehead and nose junction, bewilders the uninitiated at first. The sensation soon leaves, however, and correct tone placement becomes pleasurable, and physically as well as mentally satisfying. In fact, there is no more thrilling sensation than the one felt when every tone is vibrated in the correct resonating parts of the body, and all tones have the "point," the focus in the forehead, giving the singer a feeling of splendid freedom, confidence, and completeness. Every tone feels right, sounds right, is an unrestricted flow of beautiful sound, easy, yet powerful, and eminently satisfying.

I do remember one great singer, a famous Italian baritone, who invariably came off the opera stage with a raging headache. He would fall upon the shoulders of his colleagues, of whom I was one, and in violent accents would declare that he was going mad! It was our contention that his large, extremely resonant tones, plus his intensity while singing, caused these headaches, and we would hurry to reassure him that it was not madness, but the genius of his voice that made him feel ill. As far as I can remember he was the only accomplished singer I have known to suffer in this way. Most artists leave the stage with a pleasurable, clear sensation in their heads.

If, because of maltreatment, a voice has suffered serious setbacks, it can be remedied, but not without long and arduous labor. It is much easier to train an unplaced, unschooled, unharmed voice than it is to redeem a voice which has been broken through years of incorrect singing. But the qualities of "point and focus" will do wonders, and bad habits can be broken!

If the voice is small, it is possible to train it so that its range and power can be increased greatly and the sweetness and purity of correctly placed tones will make up for lack of volume. A beautifully modulated and controlled small voice can be just as interesting, and possess even greater charm, than one of larger size.

Another fault which I find very common is that of working exclusively on the weakest portion of the voice. The weak spots must be built up, of course, but once the voice is placed, and the student really understands and uses the correct singing method, with all tones being sung with "point," any troubles in range will disappear of themselves. The entire voice should be worked over all the time, and no portion should suffer from lack of practice and help because of another.

Recently there came to me a singer, a professional of established reputation, who complained that she was having great difficulty with her top tones. She could reach them only by forcing, and had consulted a noted New York voice teacher for help. He had assured her that her upper range could be restored by working exclusively on her middle tones and not touching the upper tones at all! (How an error could be rectified by ignoring it, he did not explain!)

I found her voice one of fine natural quality but totally lacking in resonance and focus. Under such conditions no amount of work or practice could restore her upper voice. On the contrary, the incorrect method of singing which this man was trying to teach her would very shortly have destroyed her voice completely.

As soon as a student understands and attains correct vocal technique, singing every tone with the correct sensation of the voice curving up and out and reaching the focal point at the junction of the nose and forehead, the ease thus gained will smooth out all other difficulties.

There is no doubt that the interpretation of a song is the primary consideration of the audience. But lack of beauty and purity of tone cannot be excused simply because the singer has spent so much effort

on interpretation that voice technique has been neglected. It is imperative, therefore, that the singer should have sufficient technique to allow him to interpret any song or *aria* without sacrificing its vocal beauty.

To the mind of the audience, personality and poise and the ability to "put over" a song may excuse vocal shortcomings. But although as part of an audience I agree, and enjoy interpretation as much as anyone, as a teacher I feel that too many students think they "get by" on their interpretations and feel with many other musicians that more tonal beauty, and less personality, might be an excellent thing for our present-day singers.

I do not agree with those who believe that a student should not be taught songs until he has worked on vocalises for years. That would be as dull as endless five-finger exercises on the piano without a single piece to sustain his interest. Both voice and interpretive ability should be developed simultaneously and reach their ultimate goal together. Surely no performer should call himself a singer whose vocal technique is inadequate to cope with the interpretive demands of his songs! Such a person may succeed in the limited field of vaudeville or motion pictures, where voice is not of paramount importance, and where a microphone can work miracles; but anyone who hopes to become an artist in the singing world must have as complete a vocal technique as possible, as well as interpretive ability.

The question of "coloring" the tones of the voice is always a problem to the advanced student. His natural instinct is to express an angry phrase with tones that are forceful and loud, yet which too often result in tone that seems to center in the mouth and thus loses its overtone and brilliancy. Too often, too, a joyful phrase will cause a white or too open tone, again lacking correct focus.

It is true that all sound, all tone, must be colored, dramatic or light, sad or gay, according to the composition sung, but the tone must be colored and produced in the correct way. All tones, whether

they are *forte* or *pianissimo*, light or heavy, must be formed with the correct arch and focus, and then modified as to color.

The subject of breathing for singers is a controversial one. Although breathing should be as easy as . . . well, breathing, it is often made an arduous and unpleasant task. Why, I don't know, but I have a guess that the tightlacing and the corsets of yesteryear had a good deal to do with it.

Since it is a fact that the lungs are largest at the bottom, and that when a person breathes unconsciously, as in sleep, the ribs expand and contract with each breath, it seems absurd to say that a breath should be taken by *raising* the chest and the shoulders. Such muscular exertions *cannot* help the breathing in any way whatsoever.

High breathing, which some singers and teachers unfortunately practice, is very unsatisfactory, being a hindrance rather than a help. First, because it strains the muscles of the shoulders; second, because the lungs, which are largest at the bottom, are never properly filled; third, because the upper chest alone cannot give the singing tone that correct support which the diaphragm can.

High breathing is almost always accompanied by stiffness and strain of the muscles of the throat and face, and naturally prevents the possibility of relaxation that is so necessary to easy, free flowing tones.

Correct breathing and breath control should be a simple process which after sufficient practice should be second nature, not calling for any actual effort.

Since our object is to fill the lungs to their fullest extent, when it is necessary to do so, they should be filled in the most natural way possible, and if this is done without strain, the ribs and chest will expand in what is called diaphragmatic breathing.

Standing erect, quietly take a deep breath through the nose. Relax the shoulders; the chest, diaphragm, and ribs will expand as you breathe. Holding the breath, tap the ribs or diaphragm not too gently. The strong diaphragm that is practiced and controlled will

not quaver. A tone held through this process will not shake. The loose, uncontrolled diaphragm will, on the other hand, collapse and the tone will shake and stop.

A strong, supple tone must have sufficient breath support. When the muscles of the diaphragm are strong enough to control the breath and give this support, every tone will be full-bodied and strong.

It is sometimes of value for the student to keep the hand on the diaphragm for a few minutes while practicing breathing, making sure that the ribs are expanding and the diaphragm is supporting the breath.

The amount of breath necessary depends upon the type and character of the phrase or tone to be sung. Although there must always be a sufficiency of breath, that breath when supplied to the vocal cords must be *controlled*, else a breathy or shrill tone will result.

First, the attack must not be breathy; second, the tone itself must not lack breath, or allow too much breath to escape; third, the breath must be controlled so that enough will be left within the lungs to continue the phrase until the next breathing space is reached.

The process of filling the lower portions of the lungs is called diaphragmatic breathing because the diaphragm relaxes and is lowered as the lungs fully expand. The diaphragm is a strong layer of muscle that separates the lungs from the intestines and the stomach.

When the stomach is not too full, and the diaphragm is not unnaturally tensed, a full breath lowers the diaphragm, and forces the ribs outward. When, on the other hand, the stomach is full, it does not permit the diaphragm any leeway, and it is impossible to take a comfortable, full breath. One should therefore never sing directly after a meal. Tight garments that constrict the ribs and diaphragm also hinder correct breathing, not allowing for full rib expansion. I have known singers who liked to wear some sort of corset or belt about the waist that they could push against, feeling that this gave them easier breath support. Such a contrivance is entirely unnecessary, and indeed unwise, for the body muscles should be so developed

that they will support the breath and control the diaphragm without external aids.

The most urgent requirement of correct breathing is that there should be *enough* breath, but not too much. The fact that one can hold one's breath for several minutes does not make one a singer. The ability to breathe deeply is vital, but it is the actual *control* of that breath that strengthens or weakens the singing tone. It is an interesting fact that a person with a longer breath capacity will also have a wider range and his voice will respond to placement more easily than that of a person of smaller or shorter breath. As a singer's breath develops, so too will his range.

Sufficient breath supports a tone, gives it body; but too much breath creates a breathy tone that approximates a tone made by a wind instrument played with much breath escaping outside as well as inside the instrument.

The average student, however, is seldom bothered by too much breath. Too little is the usual complaint, and when nervousness adds its toll, the voice is pinched and tight and lacks support and strength.

Nervousness tends to tense the diaphragm and abdomen muscles, and when the diaphragm is not relaxed and controlled, the breathing will be shallow and inadequate.

To calm such nervousness, the singer must relax, take a few deep breaths to lessen diaphragm tenseness and only when this relaxation has been accomplished, breathe adequately and start to sing.

Everyone realizes the necessity of breathing through the nose. The throat and mouth become dry and uncomfortable after a few breaths through the mouth alone. But for the singer, breathing through the nose is doubly important, because the fine hairs in the nostrils tend to cleanse the air as it is inhaled, and also warm it to body temperature at the same time. There are occasions when a catch-breath through the mouth is imperative because of the short time allowed for a breath in a passage, but a full breath should *always* be taken through the nostrils.

Correct breathing is simple, yet adequate breath control demands continual practice. I think it unnecessary for the student to take silent breathing exercises before the singing teacher for any length of time. As soon as the student has grasped the principle of diaphragmatic breathing, singing and breath control should be developed simultaneously. A student should not be asked to waste time and money in respiratory calisthenics without voice accompaniment. As vocal studies progress, tone exercises should become more complicated, demanding ever greater breath control. Breath control is therefore developed at the same time as tone technique and always as required by the latter.

Breathing exercises taken in spare time or while going about general duties can be extremely beneficial. Here are some simple exercises that will give the beginner practice in diaphragmatic breathing, control, and support:

1. Inhale quickly, hold the breath for approximately fifteen seconds, then exhale in short, quick gasps.
2. Inhale slowly, hold the breath for approximately fifteen seconds, then exhale quickly.
3. Inhale quickly, hold the breath from fifteen to twenty seconds, exhale slowly.

CHAPTER FIVE

VOCAL ERRORS AND THEIR CORRECTION

*Singing off pitch . . . Vibrato . . . Tremolo . . . Range
 . . . Agility . . . Danger of forcing . . . Interpretation
 . . . Musicianship . . . Foreign languages*

“SHE’S flat!”

Distressing words! Why are they heard so often? Why do singers so often sing off pitch?

There are various explanations for this common failing.

First, of course, defective hearing. Not all singers *know* they are not on key. The ear as well as the voice must receive extensive training, as, alas, all too few people are blessed with the accurate sense of pitch, and even fewer have the gift of “absolute pitch.” The latter phrase means the ability to recognize the pitch of a tone without the aid of an instrument. However, to most musicians this faculty is not of serious importance. Orchestral conductors find it helpful, although it is, roughly speaking, more in the nature of a gift than otherwise.

To return to our flattening singer, even though the ear is accurate, the tone may be “scooped,” as when the singer tries to glide onto it instead of attacking it squarely. Or the tone itself may be dull, lacking point, focus, and resonance. Such tones almost always sound flat and off pitch, and the singer accustomed to the flat, open sound of his or her own voice may allow the voice to slide and so really get off pitch.

Frequently one sings off pitch because of lack of breath control. Insufficient breath to finish a phrase may easily cause the lowering of the whole tone of the voice, and consequently the pitch.

Physical indisposition, strain, and fear, such as nervousness about a particularly difficult passage, may also cause an off-pitch note or phrase. A pinched or nasal tone, a fear of flatting, often causes a sharp tone. Forcing, pushing the voice to make it sound more powerful, will often cause a tone to be lower or higher than the singer anticipates.

There are very few singers who, at some time in their career, have not delivered tones which were badly off pitch. In fact, many famous singers have managed to hit rather frequent notes pathetically off key and yet they seem to keep their popularity. The answer to this is that in most cases the singer has so much else to offer that an occasional lapse may be overlooked. Yet, as a general rule, there is nothing more disconcerting to hear, and numerous singers have been left at the starting post because of off-pitch singing.

It must be remembered that the exceptional lapse that may happen to the best of singers because of some temporary condition doesn't excuse the continual havoc that some vocalists feel they can "get away with."

The student must learn to hear himself and to control his voice so that any off-pitch notes will be exceptions, and very infrequent ones at that.

Every tone must be practiced until it is sounded squarely on pitch, and every tone must be sung with authority and certainty, but this, of course, comes only with practice and experience.

Off-pitch singing can, in most cases, be remedied. And it *must* be remedied if the singer is to attain a modicum of success.

Vibrato vs. Tremolo

At some time or other everyone has heard a voice that sounded dull, all on one unwavering line, lacking timbre, richness, and flexibility. Such a voice lacks the softening influence of correct vibrato.

A good vibrato is the pulsation of tone, timbre, loudness, and to some extent pitch, that gives the voice body and emotional quality of a tone.* To correct dullness, and ascertain the right amount of vibrato, a voice which is dull must be allowed to flow easily, all tenseness must be removed, and with correct placement and the cultivation of an easy legato quality the tone will attain the vibrato desired.

On the other hand, voices that shake, tremble, and quaver, or which seem to pulsate slowly, sounding two pitches, suffer from a tremolo.

A tremolo can be eliminated, but only by careful handling, for it often brings discouragement and strain in its wake, and the harder the singer tries, the more evident the fault.

This error in itself proves that the singer is not approaching the ideal in voice placement at all, and the only remedy is to start again at the beginning, learning to sing correctly, for one or many of the vocal technique principles are being ignored.

The main reasons for a tremolo are the following:

1. Insufficient "point" or head tone; the singer is placing the tone low and without focus.
2. The tone is forced and pushed in an attempt to gain volume without correct "focus." The throat is strained; there is stiffness in the tongue and jaw (although sometimes the jaw itself may tremble badly from this tenseness and a tremolo ensues).
3. In the attempt to force or push the voice the singer loses control of the breath. The impact of an over-supply of uncontrolled air is too great for the vocal cords and throat to withstand; in consequence the voice shakes.
4. Lack of breath, whether because of nervousness or simply lack of breath control, will almost always cause a tremolo. The effort of trying to sing a long phrase without sufficient breath causes a tenseness of muscles.

* A record demonstrating this point is available.

Range

Many singers who do not understand the principle of "point and focus" in their singing find that high notes elude them. Lacking correct placement, a soprano will often sound like a contralto, a splendid tenor will find it easier to sing baritone parts, even though the quality of the voice makes the voice actually the former. (He would not of course have the necessary lower tones.)

A contralto may have higher tones in her voice than necessary for the type of song or *aria* she is going to sing, but if the voice quality is of the order of the warm, low contralto, she should be taught as a contralto. It is futile for her to strain and struggle to be a mezzo or dramatic soprano, merely to utilize the higher tones her voice may possess, and to lose thereby all the glorious quality that appears when the voice is used in its natural range.

The range of a singer's voice does not determine its classification. The fact that a man's voice can reach high C does not make him a tenor. It is the quality and the range that keep the vocalist comfortable, the range that brings out all the best qualities that make a voice, not the tricks that force a too-high or too-low tone.

Whenever we purchase a car that is reputed to do ninety miles an hour with ease, it is not the fact that we are going to run it at ninety all the time that makes us desire it. We all have a consciousness of highway police. But the car's ability to reach ninety with ease makes us confident that it will perform extremely well at the fifty or sixty miles an hour that we will demand of it, and of course there may be cases when the ninety miles an hour will impress those who enjoy this extra speed.

A student of mine was able to reach B-flat above high C, a remarkable feat seldom found in even the highest of coloraturas. She practiced using the highest notes in her voice simply because we found that when she could reach B-flat the A was extremely easy, and when in concertising she occasionally took her A the audience enjoyed the purity and clarity of the bell-like, seldom heard tone.

The following ranges are approximate:



Agility

Every type of voice should be agile. Although the *Allelujah* by Mozart is called a coloratura song, it should be part of every singer's repertoire, not necessarily for public performance, but as a required vocal exercise. It is a song that requires such control and vocal agility that many singers with low voices, accustomed to the heavier, slower type of singing, find it difficult to perform. But once such mastery is acquired, a singer may feel confident that his voice will obey his will, any time, anywhere, through any passage, however difficult.

There are no short cuts to accomplished singing. Instrumental musicians are apt to realize far more fully than singers the magnitude of the task before them at the outset of their careers. This is because they have an instrument which they must thoroughly master, and its very unfamiliarity at the beginning causes them to appreciate the problems before them.

But singers have only themselves to deal with and they are often inclined to overrate their own talents and intelligence. And after an all-too-short period of training, many singers are convinced of their ability to appear before an audience with success.

Forcing

When a voice is not especially large, and its possessor wishes to please his audience, he must realize that he can do so only by using the voice at his command with perfect placement, feeling, artistry, and intelligence. He must endeavor to charm rather than to dazzle or astonish.

I have said repeatedly and must say again that any straining, pushing, and tenseness in the body or in the vocal organs is definitely harmful to the singer. If such habits are persisted in for any length of time, they will subtract fifty per cent from the singing life of any voice.

One of the most usual reasons for forcing is that the vocalist is only able to hear himself to an uncertain extent. This applies not only to inexperienced singers, but to the most experienced as well, particularly when singing in a very large hall or an unaccustomed place.

Few singers have a very sure idea of how they really sound. If we are speaking or singing correctly, our voices go out into space and into others' ears. We seldom hear ourselves as others hear us.

The studio or practice room is ordinarily of medium size. A room with as few furnishings as possible is always preferable, because hangings, carpets, and draperies, or overstuffed furniture tend to absorb the tone and lessen the effectiveness of the tone the singer hears.

But no matter how full or empty the practice room may be, it is always a comparatively small salon where the singer's voice readily comes back to his own ears. On the other hand, in a large hall the voice has to travel far before it reaches the walls and rebounds to the singer's ears so that he can hear himself.

Thus it happens that the singer, accustomed to hearing his voice with a good deal of volume in the studio, thinks he is not singing loudly enough to be heard in all corners when he sings in a big hall or theater. He is, therefore, inclined to force his voice unnecessarily. The acoustics of the hall should take care of persons seated in the back rows, and extra volume is not needed if the voice is correctly placed.

This phenomenon must be understood, and in a strange place, *the singer must sing by sensation alone*, not attempting to hear himself as he would in the studio.

Many a singer possessed of a really good and properly trained voice makes a success of singing in small communities. He then goes to New York and makes a failure of his audition in the large Metropolitan Opera House, merely because he forces his voice in the quite unnecessary effort to make it carry, and loses all the ease and grace with which he formerly sang.

Artistry

I once told a friend that I would rather hear a tenor with a soul than a high C. "But," said the friend, "what do you mean by soul? How can a singer express soulfulness, as you call it, when singing? I'll take the high C!"

Years of listening to singers has not caused me to change my mind. Many singers sing the requisite tones, sing the usual songs in the usual way, and when they are through, the audience is left quite cold.

Artistry in singing is the goal to strive for, for a singer is just a singer, while an artist creates beauty.

The art of singing—the art of "putting over" a song—assumes the fact that technical difficulties have been overcome, that the actual singing tone is correct, that no passage is too difficult for the vocal technique of the singer. To attain this goal, of course, the preparation must be thorough; interpretation, repertoire, languages, ear training, etc., must be part of the artist's foundation.

A song is not just a collection of words and notes. A song is a thought, a mood, or an experience which the singer must project to the audience. This thought, mood, or experience must be expressed in every tone, every vocal inflection, every gesture. Singing, whether on the concert or operatic stage, is not a form of contest to determine who can sing the loudest, highest notes, or who can hold them the longest. Instead, it is an opportunity for the artist to create beauty and truth for a group of people whose quest for beauty has led them to music.

It is understandable, though not excusable, that American or English-speaking singers, performing in a foreign language, should occasionally mistake the meaning of the author's words. But when *English* songs are sung without any attempt at adequate interpretation, no reasonable excuse or explanation is possible. It is highly important, therefore, that the student should study interpretation with a well-qualified coach. This should be someone fully conversant with the origin and tradition of the music under consideration, for behind the words and music of a song or an operatic role lies a vast store of racial lore which must be understood and appreciated if the singer is to do full justice to the work.

For example, in one country a lullaby may be a simple cradle song, while in another country it may be a song of profound spiritual significance, embodying the problems and thoughts of its people. The singer *must* know the background of the music in order to convey these meanings, this "atmosphere," to his audience.

There is a great difference between an unmusicianly, ignorant interpretation that departs unnecessarily from the actual structure of a song, and one which, although it can be said to vary from the printed page of music in detail, is still musicianly, and the departures are legitimate aids to the verve and style of the performer.

Unmusical liberties and mistakes that result from ignorance or error are inexcusable. Departures from tradition are allowable only

when they add to the quality of a song or aria, or enhance the artist's interpretation of it.

The ultimate result of the artist's interpretation is his "style." Style is the artist's personality seen through the music performed. It is an almost indefinable, very intangible quality, and yet undeniably the individual essence of the artist's performance.

Experience, study, and musical understanding form an artist's style and as this style or musical personality is developed, it becomes the artist's claim to fame, corresponding in importance with his vocal technique.

I once asked a well-known music critic and composer on what basis he judged a singer's musical talent, and in reply he enumerated the following points of interpretation: "Style, enunciation, proper note values, tempo, flexibility, finesse, dynamics, emotion, musicianship."

They are fine sounding words. Just what do they mean?

Style: Besides including the singer's manner in general, suitability of style also depends upon the type of song. Is the song robust or delicate? Do the voice, inflections, and actions of the singer give the audience a true interpretation of that song?

Enunciation: Does the articulation satisfactorily illustrate the intelligence and thought that lie behind the words? Are the words accented so as to make their meaning unmistakable or are they pretty but meaningless sounds? Does the singer's voice placement preclude proper enunciation and does he lack the artistry to make each phrase express the composer's meaning?

Note values: Is each note being given its proper evaluation? Are eighth notes made quarters, whole notes halves? Does the accompanist have to slow down and speed up beyond normal? As a matter of fact, *the index of a singer's musicianship may be said to be found in the perfect accord with which his accompanist can follow him.* Is the accompaniment flowing freely and serenely, or must the pianist jump madly from tempo to tempo, from phrase to phrase, to compensate for the singer's mistakes? Although a singer seldom interprets a song

in exactly the same manner twice, the competent pianist can follow suitable changes with ease. The unpredictable errors of the novice or the erratic singer bring premature gray to the hair of many good pianists.

Tempo and flexibility: Although every beginner knows the importance of rhythm and tempo, many an artist lacks timing finesse. There are singers who sing a song quickly and still make it sound as though it dragged. Others can sing a song slowly, yet it sounds as though they were rushing through it. Enunciation, pronunciation, phrasing, rhythm are all concerned in tempo and they must be planned to fit every mood of a song.

The singer's feeling of rhythm and time must be flexible. Flexibility must be musical, tempo liberties that serve only to show off a vocal tone or those that are the result of error are seldom legitimate or excusable. A note may be held for a justifiable effect, but if it is unduly prolonged it will spoil the continuity of the song. (There is a famous anecdote of a noted conductor who always sat down while a certain prima donna sang her top notes, because it gave him ample time to rest!)

Finesse: The result of musical understanding. Although it is not imperative that the singer spend overmuch time in the study of harmony and counterpoint, knowledge of music is easily perceived in his delivery.. The artist's knowledge of the construction of the song should give him an insight that will result in correct interpretation.

Vocal dynamics: While vital to interpretation, dynamics can easily be over- or under-stressed. Although every song demands some *forte*, some *piano*, and some intermediate passages, there are singers who, leaping from one effect to another in their effort to gain interesting contrast, make a song or *aria* sound melodramatic. On the other hand, the beginner will often sing an entire song with complete lack of dynamic variety. Because of nervousness or inexperience every tone sounds just like every other one, until the audience feels the entire performance is inordinately dull.

Emotion: Sincerely expressed emotion is the soul of interpretation. The artist's sincerity is so evident to an audience that the show-off and the emotionally inhibited singer are seldom received with warmth.

Musicianship: Musicianship may be innate or it may be developed by study and understanding of its principles. Briefly, it means a good sense of rhythm, a proper regard for the melodic line, correct phrasing, the ability to read at sight, and a strong, underlying sense of good taste and regard for the *style* of the composition one is interpreting.

The foregoing considerations have been primarily of a musical character, yet the *text* that is sung requires quite as intelligent an approach as does the music.

Everyone knows that when a business concern engages an employee to represent the firm in a foreign country, its first consideration is whether the applicant for the position has a satisfactory knowledge of the language of that country. It is imperative that he be able to make himself understood and to understand, else he will not be able to handle the work before him.

Yet many singers whose life work will be bound up in two, three, or four languages do not take the time even to learn the correct pronunciation or meaning of the foreign text in the songs they sing!

Every student of song should have more than a nodding acquaintance with Italian, German and French, and if songs in other languages are to be sung, they should be sure to get a literal translation of every word in the composition, so that every word will be given its full measure of interpretation in tone color, volume, and general sense. Therefore, several hours a week should be spent on the study of languages, and it is extremely helpful for the student to join a group where the language he is studying is spoken to the exclusion of everything else. This may not be practicable in small communities, but the ambitious student will always find someone with whom

to practice his newly found knowledge of languages. Frequently, too, one may hear foreign language programs on the radio.

English pronunciation seldom demands a rolled "r," but many foreign languages require that the "r" be rolled at least slightly. The easiest way to learn to enunciate this letter is to keep the teeth tightly closed, the lips slightly drawn back while saying, "de, te, de, te, de, te, rrr, do, to, rrr." This should not give the student the "D.T.'s," but facilitate the correct foreign pronunciation, for after a little practice the letter "r" will be easily pronounceable any time.

Many other syllables demand such practice, and the wise student will learn how to pronounce these foreign words before they are called for in a song, so that the words themselves will not add to the difficulty of the study and interpretation that are formidable enough in themselves.

Sight reading and ear training are an essential part of a musician's education. The ability to read at sight has secured a position for many a singer who might otherwise not have been considered. Many church and chorus positions allow for only one rehearsal, and the singer who cannot sing his music with such brief preparation is not wanted. It is very useful to a singer that he be able to play a musical instrument, but it is not absolutely necessary. However, if time permits, study of the piano is highly recommended. Knowledge of the piano facilitates song study and voids the need of the constant help of an accompanist.

Acquiring a repertoire calls for concentration and a retentive memory. One of the best voices I ever had in my studio dropped out of sight, not because of lack of ability, but because she could never sing a song through without numerous mistakes. And no matter how many corrections were made, the next time there would be new mistakes. She never, in years of study, knew a complete operatic role thoroughly. There was nothing I could do about it, and the poor girl kept forgetting where she had last left her memory course.

Several hours a day should be spent on repertoire study. Part of

this time should include a silent period to allow for memorizing words; some of the time should be spent at the piano going over the music; and the rest of the period should be spent with an accompanist or coach if possible, singing easily, so as not to tire the voice.

Every student wishes to know just how much or how little actual vocalizing he should do per day. While, as I have said before, each pupil is a separate problem, I have found it a good general rule to advise practice as follows: For the beginner, about one hour per day, this to be divided into fifteen or twenty minute periods. For the advanced pupil, two hours per day is not too much, for concert and operatic appearances require performances of approximately that length, and if one is unused to singing for so long a period, a public performance will prove physically exhausting. The wise student will prepare carefully for professional work by gradually increasing his practice periods until a two-hour schedule, interspersed with ten- or fifteen-minute rest periods similar to the intermissions between acts at the theater, can be sung without fatigue.

The operatic aspirant should learn and memorize as many roles as possible. He should not limit his study to the leading roles, but should learn all the smaller ones as well. No role in an opera is *too small* for the novice, and much valuable experience can be obtained by singing small parts in professional or semi-professional performances. Not only will such experience be invaluable in combating stage fright, but it will enable him to become familiar with the stage and accustom him to singing with orchestral accompaniment, all of which will help immeasurably when the time for his debut in an important role arrives.

The manager of a famous opera house once said to me, "Madame X doesn't sing anything very *well*, but she can sing *anything!*", and Madame X was naturally an important personage in that company's roster. One of several sopranos, Madame X was the most versatile. If Y or Z or Q were ill, Madame X could be called at any time; she knew the role, she had the costumes, and she never had the jitters.

She needed little time to get into a make-up and costume, and her performance was always trustworthy. She was indeed an asset to the opera company.

Many a young woman has begun her career in just such a manner, and in many cases an impromptu debut as an understudy is much more favorable than one that is over-anticipated, fussed about, and which often turns out a disappointment to both audience and singer.

Therefore, my sincere advice to all students is to know as many roles, as many songs, as many oratorios as is possible. You can never tell when your chance will come. Opportunity may knock several times, but it is well to have an ear cocked to hear her the first time!

CHAPTER SIX

TRY YOUR VOICE ON THESE!

My favorite exercises for placing and developing the voice

THE exercises found on the following pages are intended to serve as a foundation group. Variations and further additions must be arranged at the discretion of the teacher whenever necessary to bring out or develop the individual voice. Personal errors must be handled in a personal way. Every student will need his own particular variation of exercises, whether it be in the vowels used, the number of times each exercise is sung, the range employed, or the technique stressed.

These exercises are based on the premise that vocal line, in other words, correct placement in every tone, must be established from the first. Breath control, vocal agility, perfect ear, and complete mastery of the voice are acquired through definite steps that cause the student to understand and practice so as to develop as quickly as he can.

Each type of exercise must be mastered and sung correctly, with pure and perfect vocal line, before anything more difficult is attempted. That does not mean that a single exercise should be sung to the exclusion of all others, but variations on that particular exercise should be worked upon before the student is put to trying an exercise beyond his range of voice, agility, or breath control.

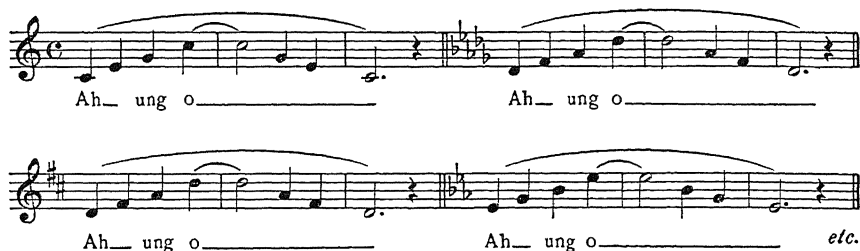
While examples given here are for the most part written in one key only, C major, it should be understood that each exercise is intended for use in all keys. The exercise should first be given in the key appropriate for the voice performing it, and should be repeated a semi-tone higher (except in such instances as specifically noted) until the limit of the voice range is reached.

The student should not expect to encompass immediately the entire limit of range appropriate for his voice. He should at first be taught to use the exercises as far as comfortable for him, and his range will be extended slowly by dint of continual practice and instruction.

Initial use of the syllables "oh" and "ung-oah" is preferable until the teacher feels that the exercise has been sufficiently mastered to allow the use of other (ordinarily more difficult) vowels. The exercise should then be taken through its complete ranges, using each and every vowel. Not all at one time, naturally, but during the course of a few practice or lesson periods.

It must be remembered that complete relaxation is necessary at all times. The teacher must endeavor to assure himself that his student's mouth is open, relaxed, and free, whatever the exercise or the vowel sung. Since some students find it easier to use other vowels than "oh," the easiest should be the first, and all others must follow, but only under careful instruction that avoids stiffening, nervousness, and consequent loss of agility and range.

Exercise 1



as seems best for the student. Remember, the mouth must be open, the jaw not stiffened while singing the “ung” sound, and the tongue must be relaxed at all times.

After a little agility is attained, and the principle of the “ung-oah” understood, the vowels can be changed, the “ung-oah” eliminated, and the exercise sung as “aaah-eee,” “oooh-eee,” or “eh-ah,” or in any variation one can devise, according to necessity.

Some students have diction difficulties; when this is the case I have them sing the above exercise using the syllables “cah-roh, mee-oh,” or “My dear I love—I love my dear.” This gives practice in word pronunciation and consonant formation while singing.*

Exercise 2



This is truly a beginner's exercise, and need be used only when the student's voice is very limited. As every teacher knows, there are students who, because of nervousness, incorrect handling of the voice, or lack of ear training, find it extremely difficult to sing even a four-note arpeggio. While such persons do not ordinarily study singing, there are times when, because of a physical handicap or simply a desire to develop the speaking or singing voice, such a student appears. It is wise to allow such a student to conquer completely this first simple exercise, slowly and carefully, before making him go on to more difficult exercises that may hamper his progress by appearing so hard and impossible to his limited ability that he becomes discouraged.

This exercise is sung softly, on any vowel easiest for the student, until the voice develops sufficiently to allow him to sing louder without strain and to change the vowel without stiffening.*

* Records demonstrating these exercises are available.

Exercise 3

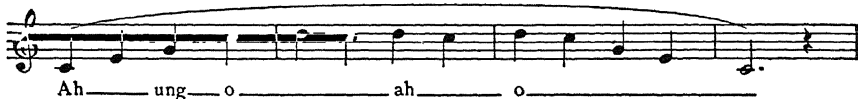
In all keys



This is a simple variation of Exercise 1, which develops the student's facility to change color, *diminuendo*, and *crescendo* on one tone. The vowels used should be changed as indicated. While using this exercise, the teacher must impress the student with the need for carrying the overtone used in the high note all the way down the arpeggio to the lowest tone.*

Exercise 4

In all keys



* Records demonstrating these exercises are available.

This exercise develops range and breath control, and teaches the student to carry the placement attained by the “ung-oah” over into all further tones sung.

Again we warn both the student and the teacher that the *jaw and tongue must not be stiffened at any time*, and that the body while relaxed should be erect and controlled. It is wise sometimes to place the hand on the diaphragm (ribs) to make the student feel just how he controls his breath.

Exercise 5

In all keys



Although the scale is somewhat advanced, the descending scale is not difficult, and vocal agility is at once developed. It is vital that the student remember to carry the overtone *down* on every note. Each note of the scale must be sounded. The voice should not slide over any tone, but, on the other hand, over-staccato attack must be avoided.*

* Records demonstrating these exercises are available.

Exercise 6

f Ah ung o *p* Ah ung o

ff Ah ung o ee *p* o ee

Tonal color, *diminuendo*, and *crescendo* in perfect placement become increasingly important as the student advances. While this exercise is primarily a developer of range and breath control, it gives the student practice in singing *piano* and *forte* passages while keeping correct placement.*

Exercise 7

Slow

Ah ung o

Ah ung o ee

This exercise gives facility in sustaining a high note as well as practice in changing color on a single note whatever the vowel used. As breath control develops, the exercise may be repeated two or three times.*

Exercise 8

p *f*

O

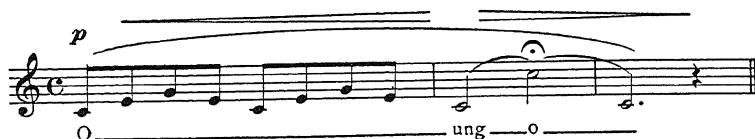
p *f*

Ee

* Records demonstrating these exercises are available.

This beginning scale exercise develops agility. Remember overtone and “point” on every note. The scale should be begun *piano*, developed until *forte* without strain. The range of the student’s voice should not be strained with this exercise. Stop within a note or two of the highest tone possible until the voice is fully developed.*

Exercise 9



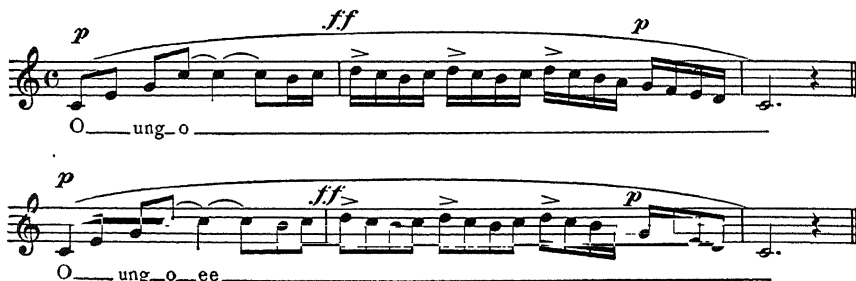
This exercise teaches the student to attain and sustain a high note without scooping or pulling to reach it. It also develops perfect pitch and the ability to *diminuendo* and *crescendo* on a single note, holding perfect placement all the while. The vowels used should be changed at the teacher’s discretion, but the “ung-oah” helps the student attain placement on the high note at first.*

Exercise 10



This exercise is similar to number 9 except that it adds the practice of a scale to the sustained high note. Correct placement while changing color and vowel must be held in mind at all times. It is excellent for attaining breath control.*

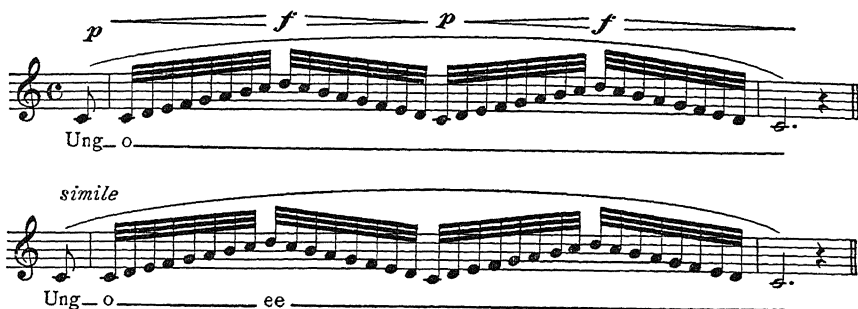
Exercise 11



* Records demonstrating the above exercises are available.

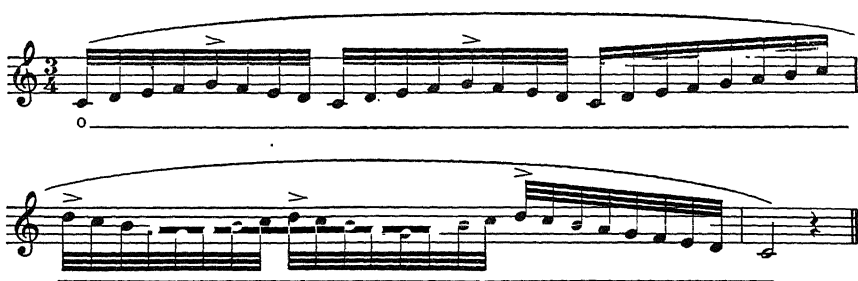
While this exercise is primarily a developer of agility in the upper voice, it also demands breath control and color change in a scale. Accent the higher notes, then bring the voice to a *piano* tone without change of placement. This exercise can be sung on any and all vowels.*

Exercise 12



This exercise, as all the others, should be sung without the "ung-oah" at the beginning, as soon as the principle of placement is understood. Being a tone over the scale, it enlarges range and breath control.*

Exercise 13



This exercise promotes agility, breath control, and voice color. When exercises such as this are repeated, they should be sung first full voice, then half voice.*

* Records demonstrating the above exercises are available.

Exercise 14



This exercise should be sung quickly the first time, and repeated rather slowly with breath controlled. The high notes should be held and changed in color and dynamics as they are sustained. It develops perfect tonal line, and serves as ear training when it is sung without accompaniment.*

Exercise 15



Besides developing breath control and agility, Exercise 15 serves to make the more advanced student feel that he is working on something difficult enough to be worth doing. As breath control develops, the exercise is sung twice on one breath. This is difficult for a majority of vocalists, and shows definite attainment in breath control and vocal agility.*

* * *

Since the average beginner has trouble to keep in mind the various do's and don'ts, I suggest that the following rules be copied and placed where the student can see them during his practice periods:

1. Inhale deep breath through the nose, and control its exhalation with the diaphragm.

* Records demonstrating the above exercises are available.

2. Think of the tone as originating at the juncture of the nose and forehead, and *always* direct the column of breath to that point.

3. Relax the jaw. If you have a tendency to close the mouth, be especially sure to drop the jaw on *descending* tones.

4. Never attack *any* tone "low," *regardless of its pitch*. Always bear in mind that point and head tone focus are present in *every* tone, not merely the high notes!

5. *Beauty* of tone, as well as *volume*, comes only from the correct use of the resonance chambers. The student's consciousness must be directed to the breathing, and to resonance at all times. These two functions can, and *must*, be consciously controlled until they become automatic.

6. Do not irritate the throat with frequent clearing and "scraping." If there is huskiness or phlegm, sing above it and it will disappear. Such condition, in an otherwise healthy throat, is usually merely a subconscious form of nervousness, which is psychological instead of physical. If humored it will result in actual throat irritation; if ignored it will disappear as suddenly as it appeared. Usually a pupil is advised, when such condition manifests itself, to "sing above it." This means to think the tone and feel the tone in the upper part of the head and face, not below the teeth.

On the other hand, if the throat is actually inflamed or congested, as with cold, tonsillitis, or other physical distress, the student should not vocalize at all until a normal condition has been restored.

7. Never scoop up to a note. Think high placement and then add the breath support, bringing the tone actually down to the pitch, not pulling it up.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ON PROGRAM MAKING

The student's first songs . . . Sample programs for every type of voice

PROGRAM arrangement is an art in itself, and a fascinating one, but such varied reasons enter into any singer's choice of repertoire that it is impossible to outline any hard and fast rules upon this subject.

Every singer chooses songs that he enjoys because he can do them well. Yet he must think beyond his own enjoyment, for there is a definite technique in arranging groups so as to entertain and interest his audience.

The artist may feel himself at his best singing gay songs, yet this would limit him so badly that he would not be considered a serious artist. Another might feel he best expressed himself by singing dramatic compositions, yet an overdose of these would soon bore an audience to tears. Although many artists are noted as specialists in their particular fields, such as the *lieder*, spirituals, opera, etc., the accomplished artist must be able to sing more than one kind of music if he is to make the fullest appeal to his hearers.

The vocal student should develop his repertoire in conjunction with his vocal ability. Every song presents a problem, some more difficult than others, and the teacher should present these problems to the student, helping him to overcome them as they arise.

The first problem for the beginner is to sing words, as differentiated from simple vowel sounds found in exercises. Songs with simple intervals and words in which vowels predominate are easiest for him. For this reason in my studio the beginning student first sings the old Italian songs, such as:

<i>Caro mio ben</i>	Giordani
<i>Tu lo sai</i>	Torelli
<i>Nina</i>	Pergolesi
<i>Lungi dal caro bene</i>	Secchi
<i>Vergin, tutta amor</i>	Durante
<i>Amarilli</i>	Caccini
<i>Pur dicesti, O bocca bella</i>	Lotti
<i>Se tu m'ami</i>	Pergolesi

For most students songs of slow tempo are best at first. Later he may work on those of faster *tempi*, such as:

<i>Che fiero costume</i>	Legrenzi
<i>Quel ruscelletto</i>	Paradies
<i>Se l'aura spira</i>	Frescobaldi
<i>Vittoria, mio core!</i>	Carissimi

These songs have been transposed for every voice range, both male and female. They present few stumbling blocks and are quite simple to memorize.

Other excellent beginning songs are "Bergerettes" of the Eighteenth century French school, and some of the old English songs, such as:

<i>The Lass with the Delicate Air</i>	Arne
<i>When Love is Kind</i>	Traditional
<i>Have You But Seen a Whyte Lily Grow</i>	Traditional

If the student finds it difficult to keep on pitch without melody accompaniment, ear training should be intensive and include part singing practice. The following songs are not too difficult for this type of student:

<i>I've Been Roaming</i>	Horn
<i>Abide with Me</i>	Bach
<i>Dell'antro magico</i>	Cavalli
<i>Lass of Richmond Hill</i>	Hook
<i>Come raggio di sol</i>	Caldara
<i>Rugiadose, odorose</i>	Scarlatti

Songs that offer simple, direct emotions, obvious dynamics, and melody should be chosen for the beginner. Subtle art songs, such as many *lieder* and the moderns, demand more thought and shading than the beginner is prepared to give. It would never do for the novice to become discouraged and unhappy because of the amount of criticism his teacher must give him. Let him first overcome the obvious and familiar and then proceed to music that demands a musicianly understanding and taste.

The good teacher knows innumerable songs, songs for every voice, for every temperament, every stage of study, every audience, and for every occasion. Unfortunately, many teachers fall into a common error. They give the same song to all students with similar voice ranges. It has been said that comparisons are odious, and the comparisons that will be drawn as the various students in many stages of attainment sing these songs before a student gathering or in class often will hinder rather than help.

There are so many songs that will answer every need that it would be impossible to name them here. There are enough to go around, and more, so why not use them? The mentally indolent teacher, accompanist, or coach will of course stick to the old routine numbers that he knows. The modern teacher will study artist programs and find new and interesting songs with which to encourage his students.

The wise teacher will not allow a student to sing a song in public until it can be sung without error or fear. Since students work best on the things they like, the teacher should allow the student his choice out of a group offered for a specific study period.

In learning the interpretation of songs the student should be allowed some creative latitude. I have known teachers who had such hidebound ideas on the subject of how a song or *aria* should be sung that their students were allowed no joy in singing; everything had to be done by rote. Naturally the teacher has a greater understanding of the demands of the composition and the student would do well to follow his teacher's advice, yet many teachers would benefit much

if they would appreciate the creative imagination of the youth they teach, encouraging and suggesting rather than laying down the law.

There are also teachers whose musical background is so limited that they are unable to help their students with repertoire interpretation. Although this may imply that the teacher is inefficient, this does not always follow. It is quite possible that his voice production method is correct and worth knowing, and that his students go to a "coach" solely to study repertoire.

The term coach has been rather abused in the parlance of the musical world. Every pianist, to say nothing of violinists or drummers, feels that because he understands music he can coach songs, and while doing so, also teach singers how to sing!

The fact that one can recognize a good voice when one hears it is not the sole attribute of a good teacher. Many such musicians as I mention above have no other qualifications for voice teaching. The voice teacher must have the proper background of study and practical experience and singing. No other one should attempt to tell the student how to place the voice. The accomplished musician can, and often does, teach interpretation, but the wise singer will heed only his trusted voice teacher when it comes to placement. For this reason I consider it far better for the student to receive his musical education, insofar as his voice is concerned, directly from his vocal teacher.

Of course, operatic coaching, in which he must learn acting and stage deportment, is a field unto itself. For this a reputable conductor-coach, whose chief concern is the singer's musicianship and acting ability, is highly desirable.

In planning programs for special occasions the singer must take into consideration the type of audience that will be present. For example, a program for a woman's bridge luncheon should offer music of the romantic style while a program for a male gathering should abound in the more rugged, virile type of song. Gay songs

with clever lyrics, songs of the sea and of nature are always enjoyed by masculine listeners.

A good general rule to follow in formulating a program for a mixed audience is to devote part of the program to standard classical songs to give it artistic dignity; a part to new and less-known works, to pacify the critics and those in constant search of novelties; then a small group of songs which are closely associated with the life and career of the singer; and finally a few popular but not-too-hackneyed songs which everyone likes.

The singer who continually uses the same songs is as much of a bore as the man who tells the same stories, year after year, and expects his friends to laugh as delightedly as if the yarn were a new one.

I proffer the following sample programs which are suggestive of the variety which can be put into the average recital.

Coloratura Soprano

1

<i>Pastorale</i>	Veracini
<i>Chi vuol la zingarella</i>	Paisiello
<i>Se tu m'ami</i>	Pergolesi
<i>I've Been Roaming</i>	Horn
<i>Pack Clouds Away</i>	Bergh

2

<i>Roses d'hiver</i>	Fontenailles
<i>D'une prison</i>	Hahn
<i>Carnaval</i>	Fourdrain
<i>Die Lehre</i>	Bendix

3

<i>Sylvelin</i>	Sinding
<i>My Shadow</i>	Samuels
<i>Who Will Buy My Lavender</i>	German
<i>At Eve I Heard a Flute</i>	Strickland

4

<i>Jewel Song (Faust)</i>	Gounod
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Soprano

1

<i>Batti, batti</i> (Don Giovanni).....	Mozart
<i>Aubade</i>	Lalo
<i>Der Traum</i>	Rubinstein
<i>La colomba</i> (Tuscan Folk Song; 16th Cent.)....	Schindler, arr.
<i>Mirage</i>	Beach

2

<i>C'est l'extase</i>	Debussy
<i>L'Ombre des Arbres</i>	Debussy
<i>Cortege</i>	Poldowski
<i>Canto di Primavera</i>	Cimara

3

<i>Le Chapellier</i>	Satie
<i>L'Oiseau Bleu</i>	Camille Decreus
<i>Nana</i>	de Falla
<i>Seguidilla</i>	de Falla

4

<i>Air, Scene and Gavotte</i> (Manon).....	Massenet
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5

<i>My Lady of Clouds</i>	Steinert
<i>Betrayed</i>	Manning
<i>May's a Winsome Lass</i>	Saunders
<i>A Memory</i>	Ganz
<i>At the Well</i>	Hageman

Soprano

1

<i>Il est doux, il est bon</i> (Herodiade).....	Massenet
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2

<i>Air de Lia</i> (L'Enfant Prodigue).....	Debussy
<i>La Mort des amants</i>	Debussy
<i>J'ai pleuré en rêve</i>	Hüe
<i>Le Moulin</i>	Pierné
<i>Waltz</i>	Arensky
<i>Toi Seul</i>	Tschaikowsky

3

<i>The Last Hour</i>	Kramer
<i>I Arise from Dreams of Thee</i>	Delius
<i>Spring Voices</i>	Quilter
<i>The Little Dancers</i>	Hageman
<i>Serenade</i>	Carpenter

4

<i>Un bel di vedremo</i> (Madame Butterfly)	Puccini
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Dramatic Soprano

1

<i>Scene and Aria</i> (Ah, perfido!)	Beethoven
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2

<i>Von ewiger Liebe</i>	Brahms
<i>O wüsst ich doch den Weg zurück</i>	Brahms
<i>So willst du des Armen</i>	Brahms
<i>Allerseelen</i>	Strauss
<i>Ich trage meine Minne</i>	Strauss
<i>Cäcilie</i>	Strauss

3

<i>Der gynger en Båd</i>	Grieg
<i>En Svane</i>	Grieg
<i>Og jeg vil ha' mig en Hjertenskjaer</i>	Grieg
<i>Med en primulaveris</i>	Grieg
<i>Tak for Dit Raad</i>	Grieg

4

<i>Allmach'ge Jungfrau</i> (Tannhäuser)	Wagner
<i>Dich, theure Halle</i> (Tannhäuser)	Wagner

Dramatic Soprano

1

<i>Seitdem dein Aug' in meines schaute</i>	Strauss
<i>Ach, Lieb, ich muss nun scheiden</i>	Strauss
<i>Schön sind, doch kalt die Himmelssterne</i>	Strauss
<i>Ich liebe dich</i>	Strauss

2

<i>Mens jeg venter</i>	Grieg
<i>Lys Nat</i>	Grieg
<i>Der gynger en Båd</i>	Grieg
<i>Og se, hun, kim</i>	Jordan
<i>Es naht de Herbst</i>	Jordan

3

<i>We Two Together</i>	Kernochan
<i>Nocturne</i>	Head
<i>Midsummer</i>	Worth
<i>Spendthrift</i>	Charles
<i>White Horses of the Sea</i>	Warren
<i>Finale</i>	Sharp

4

<i>Einsam in trüben Tagen (Lohengrin)</i>	Wagner
<i>Du bist der Lenz (Die Walküre)</i>	Wagner

Contralto

1

<i>In questa tomba</i>	Beethoven
<i>Voce di donna (La Gioconda)</i>	Ponchielli

2

<i>Liebesfeier</i>	Weingartner
<i>Der alte Herr</i>	Graener
<i>Wer hat das Liedlein erdacht</i>	Mahler
<i>Sie wissen's nicht</i>	Strauss
<i>Der Sieger</i>	Kaun

3

<i>Now Shines the Dew</i>	Rubinstein
<i>The Journey</i>	Glinka
<i>Deep Hidden in My Heart</i>	Arensky
<i>Floods of Spring</i>	Rachmaninoff

4

<i>Night, and the Curtains Drawn</i>	Ferrata
<i>Vesuvius</i>	Leoni
<i>Yasmin</i>	Dobson
<i>Dodo (based on folk song of the Pyrenees)</i>	Paxson
<i>Love Went A-riding</i>	Bridge
<i>A Bedtime Song</i>	Bergh

Contralto

1

<i>Te Deum</i>	Handel
<i>Tutta raccolta</i>	Handel
<i>De Flöte weich Gefühl</i>	Handel
<i>A Bruno Vestiti</i>	Carissimi

2

<i>Die Vogel</i>	Schubert
<i>Ave Maria</i>	Schubert
<i>Der Nussbaum</i>	Schumann
<i>Gesang Weylas</i>	Wolf

3

<i>Irish Folk Song</i>	Foote
<i>Some Time</i>	Rossotto
<i>Eros</i>	Cohen
<i>Idle Wishes</i>	Sibelius
<i>Finnish Sailor's Song</i>	Verhanen
<i>Dark Her Lodge Door</i>	Farwell

4

<i>Done Foun' my Los' Sheep</i>	Johnson, arr.
<i>Honor, Honor</i>	Johnson, arr.
<i>Were You There</i>	Burleigh, arr.
<i>Dere's No Hidin' Place Down Dere</i>	Brown, arr.

Tenor

1

<i>Liebestraum</i>	Liszt-Schipa
<i>Serenata</i>	Schubert
<i>Son tutta duolo</i>	Scarlatti
<i>Le Violette</i>	Scarlatti

2

<i>Come un bel di</i> (Andrea Chenier).....	Giordano
<i>Le donne curiose</i> (Madrigal).....	Wolf-Ferrari
<i>Oh, Lola</i> (Cavalleria Rusticana).....	Mascagni
<i>M' Appari</i> (Martha).....	Flotow

3

<i>Se Tu Mi Parli D' Amor</i>	Schipa
<i>Princesita</i>	Padilla
<i>Tu ca nun chiegne</i>	De Curtis
<i>O Surdato Innammurato</i>	Cannio

Tenor

1

<i>Der Lindenbaum</i>	Schubert
<i>Trock'ne Blumen</i>	Schubert
<i>Wohin?</i>	Schubert
<i>Die Post</i>	Schubert

2

<i>Bonjour, Suzon</i>	Pessard
<i>Vainement, ma bien aimée (Le Roi d'Ys)</i>	Lalo
<i>Am schönsten Sommerabend war's</i>	Grieg
<i>Eros</i>	Grieg

3

<i>From "Lied der Liebe"</i>	J. Strauss-Korngold
<i>Du bist mein Traum</i>	
<i>Dort rauscht und plauscht der Wienerwald</i>	
<i>Sailing Homeward</i>	Warren
<i>The Time for Making Songs Has Come</i>	Rogers

Tenor

1

<i>Tu lo sai</i>	Torelli
<i>Le Violette</i>	Scarlatti
<i>Il mio tesoro (Don Giovanni)</i>	Mozart

2

<i>Sagesse</i>	Panizza
<i>Chevauchée Cosaque</i>	Fourdrain
<i>Je crois entendre encore (Les Pecheurs de Perles)</i>	Bizet

3

<i>Raconto di Rudolfo (La Boheme)</i>	Puccini
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4

<i>A Spirit Flower</i>	Campbell-Tipton
<i>Blue Are Her Eyes</i>	W. Watts
<i>The Floods of Spring</i>	Rachmaninoff
<i>Solitude</i>	Saunders

5

<i>La Playera</i>	Granados-Schipa
<i>Bolero</i>	Grever
<i>El Trust de los tenorios</i>	Serrano

Baritone

1

<i>Dank sei Dir, Herr</i>	Handel
<i>Air from "Comus"</i>	Arne
<i>Traum durch die Dämmerung</i>	Strauss
<i>Erlkönig</i>	Schubert

2

<i>Phidyle</i>	Duparc
<i>Nicolette</i>	Ravel
<i>Non è ver</i>	Mattei
<i>L'Intruse</i>	Février
<i>Drinking Song (Hamlet)</i>	Thomas

3

<i>Sing a While Longer</i>	O'Hara
<i>Your Presence</i>	M. Schumann
<i>Rhymes of a Rover</i>	Hollister
<i>The Rich Man</i>	Hageman
<i>To My Mother</i>	MacGimsey
<i>David and Goliath</i>	Malotte

Baritone

1

<i>Invocazione di Orfeo</i>	Peri
<i>Furibondo spira il vento</i>	Handel
<i>M'ha pressa alla sua ragna</i>	Paradies
<i>La Danza</i>	Rossini

2

<i>Widmung</i>	Franz
<i>O liebliche Wangen</i>	Brahms
<i>Verborgenheit</i>	Wolf
<i>Ich hab' ein kleines Lied erdacht</i>	Bungert
<i>Cäcilie</i>	Strauss

3

<i>Nemico della Patria (Andrea Chenier)</i>	Giordano
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4

<i>Over the Steppe</i>	Gretchaninoff
<i>Hopak</i>	Moussorgsky
<i>None but the Lonely Heart</i>	Tschaikowsky
<i>Caucasian Melody</i>	Gorin
<i>The Night Rider</i>	Bergh

5

<i>Sundown</i>	Hageman
<i>One Little Cloud</i>	Tyson
<i>Within My Dreams</i>	Gorin
<i>The Poor Old Man</i>	Malotte
<i>Upstream</i>	Malotte
<i>May Is a Winsome Lass</i>	Saunders

Basso

1

<i>Bois épais</i> (Amadis).....	Lully
<i>Gloire a Vanna!</i> (Scene Monna Vanna).....	Février

2

<i>None but the Lonely Heart</i>	Tschaikowsky
<i>The Old Corporal</i>	Dargomizhsky
<i>Child's Evening Prayer</i>	Moussorgsky
<i>By the Walls of Kazan</i> (Boris Goudonoff).....	Moussorgsky

3

<i>Frühlingsreigen</i>	Fleischmann
<i>Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht</i>	Paxon
<i>O, was ich mich betruebe!</i> (Bartered Bride).....	Smetana

5

<i>Border Ballad</i>	Cowen
<i>The Bell-Man</i>	Forsyth
<i>Bone Come A-Knittin'</i>	Wolfe
<i>My Parting Gift</i>	Warren

Usually an operatic singer gives his audience the *arias* they have come to associate with him, while the artist who can interpret the subtle art songs appreciated by an educated musical audience favors those.

And just one more warning! Artists who feel that their appeal is very wide sing songs that they think will entrance the layman. It is extremely easy for this type of artist to lower his standard and to present the same songs time and time again because the "public likes 'em." It is all very well to feed babies pap, but some artists seem to think that all audiences, particularly provincial ones, are mental babes. They are not, and they do enjoy a change of diet!

CHAPTER EIGHT

A STAR IS BORN, WE HOPE!

*The audition . . . Different qualities needed . . . Managers . . .
Value of publicity . . . Photos and circulars . . . Stage fright . . .
Deportment and poise . . . Personal appearance and dress*

AND now we come to that momentous day when the student is assured by his teacher, as well as his friends, that he is justified in seeking professional engagements. He goes forth to find them.

The first hurdle he faces—and one which he will repeatedly have to face throughout his career—is the audition. Few persons are at their best at an audition, for these ordeals usually occur in unfamiliar surroundings, are arranged upon very short notice, and are generally so very brief that the singer barely has time to warm up before the whole session is over.

The choice of songs for such auditions must be determined by the effect one wishes to make and the type of position for which one is auditioning. First impressions are very important, and as time is short the singer should use such songs as best display his finest qualities, or those which are most necessary in the position for which he is applying. Needless to say, the compositions used should be so familiar to the artist that they can be sung with aplomb despite his inevitable nervousness.

Some auditions allow for only one song, others for a group. If the group is permitted, the first song should serve to warm up the voice. This also allows the singer to calm his nerves, judge his audience and the acoustics of the room or hall.

It is only natural that every auditorium should have acoustics

peculiar to itself. A small room with a good many people in it does not allow for much dramatic interpretation in very full voice. Continuous volume of *forte* sound will cause the audience discomfort. A small room and gathering allow the singer to use subtle and suitable shading, calling for easy, smooth-flowing vocalizing, with interesting gradations of tone. *Forte* passages for emphasis, and to show the brilliance of the voice, can be used only occasionally.

On the other hand, a large barn or a hall will not allow the singer much latitude in putting over delicate nuances, for beyond the first rows much subtlety is lost. Such a hall calls for more sweeping and dramatic interpretations aimed for the very last row. This does not mean that shading and interpretative intonation are impossible; correct mezzo voce will carry anywhere, but the general effect of the selections chosen must be broader in feeling.

If an audition is to consist of more than one song, the first, then, should allow the singer to "warm up"; the second should show off the dramatic possibilities of the voice; and the third, the agility of the voice and the personality of the singer. If the audition is a success, the singer will probably be asked to sing further selections. There should be a number on hand, material of every type, so that the judges may select anything suitable.

The beginner is often called upon to give an audition for church work. This calls for some type of solo that the church requires, and the singer should impress his auditors with his ability to read at sight. Many churches allow for only one or two rehearsals on any composition to be performed, and the ability to learn speedily and sing a composition without preliminary work will stand the singer in very good stead.

Motion pictures are a field in themselves, and it is wise for the singer to inquire of the musical director who is in charge just what type of music he is auditioning for. In case this is not known, selections similar to those used for radio auditions are best.

Smartness, personality, voice, and temperament are necessary for

the singer who desires to appear in singing pictures. For work that calls for singing only, backstage, as it were, or for dubbing into a sound track, the singer must show excellent technique and dramatic power and high notes that are sure to be needed. Personal appearance in such cases is not vitally important.

Television calls for microphone personality with the addition of attractive appearance *and* acting ability.

I know of no greater help and source of comfort to a singer than an accompanist who, through frequent association and practice, has learned the artist's manner of interpretation and his idiosyncrasies. Since an experienced, congenial accompanist can aid a singer in innumerable ways, every student would do well to arrange to practice and work with such a pianist as soon as he is ready to study repertoire and his budget allows such an expenditure. It is always best to have a familiar accompanist for performances or auditions, for it is oftentimes fatal to trust in anyone who happens to be there at the moment and "thinks he can play it."

Although auditions can be obtained sometimes by the singer himself without the aid of an agent or manager, the average young artist will advance further and more rapidly if he can induce a reputable agent to take him under his wing. Few artists are capable of managing their own appearances, for they have neither the practical knowledge—the business sense—nor the all-important connections. However, since so much depends upon the agent or manager, the choice must be a very careful one.

There are various kinds of managements. There are, for example, the imposing firms backed by the big broadcasting companies. Then there are the smaller agencies, with a less impressive list of artists, which are usually conducted and sponsored by the agent himself. There are many managers who arrange concerts in their communities but who do not endeavor to promote individual artists; and there are also those personal representatives who take charge of an artist's entire professional career and represent him in a business sense to all

other managers, agencies, etc. The large, reputable concerns seldom accept an unknown artist unless his gifts are exceptional. The lesser agent will take unknowns under his wing, but they must have what he feels are superior qualifications for success.

There are, of course, unscrupulous people in the business who will contract to manage anyone, worthwhile or not, if that person has plenty of money. But such agents seldom last, as their word does not carry any weight after they fail to keep faith with other managers and the public. Although the manager must serve the artists under his banner, he must also keep faith with the public in every respect, or he will soon find that he cannot sell the services of *any* of his artists.

Some managers are excellent in the case of one artist, yet cannot seem to put over another who is perhaps quite as meritorious. The singer who wishes to appear frequently must be sure that he is in the hands of a competent, honest, and interested manager.

The young artist must help the manager in every way, singing whenever and wherever necessary, paid or free of charge, entertaining, and entering into any publicity schemes wholeheartedly.

There are times when an unknown artist is more of a trouble-maker than a money-maker to a manager. For, alas! the unknown must be recognized by the public before he becomes a paying proposition.

Many managers earn all the money they receive from their artists and deserve a good bit more. It is quite legitimate for a reputable manager to ask a retaining fee from the young or not well-known singer. This fee should be credited to the artist's later earnings, but it is only natural that the agent should demand some assurance that he will be paid for his work. For, excepting in the case of outstanding genius or distinction, the possibility of putting over an artist is always a gamble, and the time expended by the manager on a novice would pay him far better and more regularly if expended upon another artist already established in the public esteem.

"A word to the wise" is, in these days of great publicity campaigns, not sufficient. The public today must be told and told again and again. Advertising has become a fine art, and to a great extent the basis of business. Before a singer can command any sort of a salary he must be "known," that is, his accomplishments must be known to the public and to the managers who will engage him, and this can be attained only through the medium of the press, the columns of newspapers and magazines, and their paid advertising pages.

Few beginners have the necessary cash for an advertising campaign, and fewer still realize the importance of such a move. But most artists could, with intelligent help, get more publicity than they do.

Widespread publicity campaigns are subscribed to by all the famous artists, however well established they may be, in addition to the gratuitous publicity they receive in the daily press. They advertise skillfully in the papers and magazines of the musical world and "tell" the public. Expert publicity advice is worth its weight in gold. Although the process may be expensive, such publicity can be paid for by one valuable engagement that it may bring.

If the artist is worth advertising, he is worth advertising well, in an ethical and professional manner that will bring results. It is foolish to think that an artist can run his own publicity campaign. This is highly specialized work and must be handled by an expert.

A young artist must realize that the amount of space given to stars and almost-stars in the papers is not always commensurate with the stars' popularity, but with the *news value* of the item about the star that is presented to the paper. A newspaper must live up to its name and present news to its reading public. Yet many singers and teachers are indignant when the notices they write and send to the papers are not printed. They revile the paper for favoritism, declaring that so-and-so gets a great deal of publicity while they are neglected. This might well be true, but if these neglected souls would analyze the notices that are published, they would understand that

the announcements printed have news value in some way, thus passing the editorial all-seeing eye and reaching print.

"News value" means something unusual, something about someone already in the public eye, or something that people will want to know about, to go to see or hear.

If young artists and teachers will realize, either in working with their manager's publicity men or on their own, that any item sent to a paper or magazine must have novelty and news value, they will receive the publicity they desire.

There are several ways of arranging an advertising campaign for an artist. The best, of course, is to employ a reputable publicity expert who will take over the whole job. This, of course, is expensive and although it will help a young artist, it is often far beyond his means. Most managers, however, have publicity departments to take care of their artists. The artist must help this department in every way.

The manager's publicity expert will demand photographs to send to papers and magazines. A variety of poses, portraits, etc., are needed; all of the types that will please editors and make good cuts, and preferably sharp, clear, and on glossy paper. It is wise to visit a good photographer, explaining how the photographs are to be used, and to stock up well for all emergencies.

If the artist is to advertise in musical journals, cuts must be made, usually at the artist's expense. A variety of sizes are needed, suitable to the places they will be used. Some will be used in the advertising columns, some in the news sections, in articles, or with brief items. The concerts and doings of the advertisers make up the news of such magazines, and it must be remembered that unless the musical event is very important, few magazines will cover appearances of non-advertisers.

Printed literature, such as circulars, large and small, is needed. They must contain reprints of favorable criticisms, pictures, news of the artist's capabilities, and a smartly phrased selling talk. Such

folders help the artist's manager convince the various local entrepreneurs that this particular artist is worth engaging.

Window cards, posters, and so on, will also be needed as the artist makes appearances. In some cases the management stands this expense, in others the artist is charged for such work.

And now let's presume that the young artist has passed his audition and has obtained his first important public appearance. As he steps upon the stage there is an appreciative murmur from the audience, or perhaps there is an instant of hushed, anticipatory silence; in either case, in this brief moment a definite reaction has been engendered in his audience and much of his success has already been made or lost.

What causes this? What makes an audience approve or disapprove before a note is sounded? The complete answer to this would be to explain, which is hardly possible, the whole phenomenon of personality.

There are, however, certain attributes that are found in all successful artists and many of these can be catalogued. As a matter of fact, these very personality attributes are often all that one can see as the difference between successful and unsuccessful performers.

In the seasoned, experienced artists there seems to be a heart-warming self-confidence, a joyous poise that exudes a pleasurable feeling to the audience. The very entrance of a successful artist seems to convey to the listeners the thought that they can anticipate a pleasant evening, and that everyone concerned will have a happy time.

Self-confidence should not be misinterpreted. It has nothing in common with cocksureness or arrogance. Some artists stride onto a stage as though they were going to take it by storm. This hardly induces the desired audience reaction. On the other hand, amateurs or beginners are apt to sidle onto the stage with an apologetic demeanor that is just as trying to the patience of an intelligent audience.

It is imperative, therefore, that every student has plenty of prac-

tice in performing before an audience prior to his seeking serious professional engagements. He should have sung at innumerable amateur and semi-professional gatherings, and in addition to these, and prior to them, he should have had ample opportunity for singing at student recitals, given for that purpose, by his teacher.

I still remember the first time I sang before an audience without the comforting backing of a choir or school chorus to lend me confidence! It was in Vienna, and as it was my first solo appearance I had no memories of previous attacks of stage fright to warn me. So gayly, unsuspectingly, I arrived at the hall and walked out on the stage.

The first verse of my song came out somehow; to this day I don't know how I managed it; but the second part was too much. I opened my mouth but not a sound was to be heard! I was paralyzed. My feet seemed glued to the stage and I couldn't even run to cover in the wings. For an eternity, agonized, I stood there. Then, somehow, inch by inch, my paralyzed legs finally began to move and I dashed out of the building, out into the street, leaving my hat, coat, stick—and my fee—behind me.

The fiasco convinced me that a singing career was not for me, and the next day I went sadly to my teacher to bid him farewell. To my great surprise and relief he received me gently, returned the clothing I had left in the dressing room, handed me my fee of a couple of gulden, and, putting his arm around my shoulder, he said, "Never mind, next time it will be better. Now, let us sing."

Years later, when I became a teacher, it was the memory of this early and agonizing experience that decided me to prepare my pupils and fortify them by giving them, regularly, ample opportunity for conquering their nervousness and stage fright under pleasant and sympathetic conditions. I do this by gradual and easy stages, letting the beginners sing at afternoon "recitals" at which only their fellow students and a few friends are present, and then, when they have progressed sufficiently, letting them sing with the more advanced

students at the monthly evening recitals where they face a larger audience, which includes strangers as well as friends and fellow students.

One of the oddities of stage fright is that it usually induces students who sing beautifully in the studio to revert to their old, incorrect habits of singing directly they perform away from the studio. Nor is this true merely of beginners. On the contrary, the more experienced a singer has been before he adopts a newer, better method of singing, the more he seems to revert to his original methods of voice production when under stress, no matter how poor or useless they may have proved themselves in the past.

The inexperienced beginner, whether just because he is not facing his teacher or because of nervous excitement at the ordeal of facing an audience, seems to lose all semblance of breath control, and along with this very disturbing phenomenon feels that his voice is not loud enough and begins to force. Thus the last vestige of control leaves him, and since the effect is far from satisfactory, the student feels badly put back; he knows he can sing in the studio, but feels he will never make a success because he cannot sing for the public.

If the beginner finds himself nervous at the start of a performance, three deep breaths before nodding to the accompanist to begin, or before walking out on cue in opera, will aid him in regaining composure. The deep breathing relaxes the diaphragm, and facilitates consequent breathing and tone support.

Once on the stage, the business at hand must be uppermost in mind. And if all thought of self is ignored in favor of the job to be done, mental calm is sure to follow.

The artist must confront his auditors so that as many as possible can see his face. The head should be turned occasionally to one side of the audience and then to the other. This, of course, gives everyone a chance to see the singer's facial expressions, and tends to hold the interest of all sections of an audience. These changes, however, must be smooth. Any jerkiness of movement is distracting.

There are times when some one person in an audience will catch the inexperienced performer's eye and the nervous beginner will oftentimes find himself staring intently in one direction. It is true that the idea of talking or singing to only one person may help overcome nervousness in some cases, but the whole audience is there to be entertained and the beginner will do well to shift his gaze from time to time. A blank gaze that seems to go directly over the heads of the audience is unattractive. From the very beginning the artist should train himself to appear to look directly at his audience. Doing so, he is able to gauge reactions or at least imply that he is striving to please all.

In an effort to secure a dramatic effect, many young actors tend to tie themselves up in agonizing knots. Realism is all very well, but strain, rigidity, and tenseness detract from the singer's ability either to act or sing. The greatest actors are not those who *feel* the emotions of the character they are playing but, instead, those who can make the *audience* do the "feeling."

All movements on the stage must be relaxed and free, and in opera the gestures can be large or small, depending upon the occasion and the size of the auditorium; but while they must always be true to character, they must leave the singer free to sing and to change his position, in relation to others on the stage, without undue effort.

Since operatic performances may require the artist to sing in almost any position, lying down, sitting, kneeling, it is wise to give advanced pupils practice in such maneuvers. Whatever the position called for, the diaphragm must be free to allow the singer breath support and control. Practice and experience will give the student technique in singing freedom even while he gives the audience the illusion of strenuous acting.

Although I am not a posture teacher, and specialized instruction of this important detail has no place in this book, erect yet graceful bearing is so vital to the singer that a few helpful rules will not be amiss here.

When the average person tries to stand erect, his shoulders are pulled up, his back pulled into a curve, and his head held in an awkward position that is supposed to give the effect of "chin up." This pose is not only ungainly but harmful to the singer, for such a rigid position cramps the abdomen (which is held in by force) and a deep, easy breath is impossible. Correct posture is so simple it should never require effort.

Try this yourself. Stand in a relaxed fashion with your feet pointing straight ahead, a few inches apart. Now instead of stiffening up, follow these instructions easily so that every part of the body is relaxed yet controlled. Imagine that you have a string attached to your chest just below the throat. This string is attached to the ceiling, and pulls your chest up. Do not allow the shoulders to rise as the chest goes up. The shoulders must remain relaxed and in a normal position. Now that the chest is elevated, the abdomen doesn't have to be held in through any actual effort, for the chest-lift automatically flattens the abdomen.

Now again imagine a string attached to each side of your hip bones or pelvis. These strings are pulled forward. In other words, the hips are kept in position directly under the rib cage. This assures you of a straight back. The spinal column is quite straight when the pelvis is directly under the ribs. The head remains relaxed, is not pushed forward, but seems to rest directly on top of the spinal column.

Too many people are round-shouldered and sway-backed. Why? Because they feel it too much of a struggle to stand up straight. Of course, it is a struggle when it is done incorrectly. But correct posture is delightfully easy and less tiring in every way than the usual curving of the spine or twisting of the backbone that is the result of lazy stooping or standing in a sway-backed position.

The position of the body I have described removes ungainly bulges of derriere and abdomen and yet allows the singer perfect freedom of the diaphragm for breath and tone support. It is very important

that the body remain relaxed, although mentally in hand, and that the shoulders remain normally low and easy.

Although standing posture may be understood, the average person reverts to type when walking. The head pushes forward, the body curves, the shoulders arrive first, the hips and the legs last. This curved effect is unattractive, and when the singer walks out onto the stage any smart effect of clothing or figure is spoiled. This is particularly true when a train or a long cloak is worn, and when a regal effect is desired as in various operatic roles.

The body must be kept in the same position, whether walking or standing. This calls for concerted, controlled movement, with the thighs and hips walking ahead, if it can be described so, and the upper part of the body still in a direct line over the hips. This is done by keeping the body erect as when standing, and the legs moving forward, the hips seeming to lead the body.

It is unfortunate for any singer to be overweight, but even if he is it is not necessary for him to waddle! The waddle is the result of walking with the legs too far apart. Although many posture teachers say that the ideal walk is one that puts one foot directly in front of the other, I do not feel that most people can walk thus with ease. I suggest, therefore, that instead of attempting to walk on one straight line you walk on two lines which are very close together. This gives the same effect, eliminates all possibilities of a waddle, and yet does not call for extraordinary control or practice.

As an example of the vagaries of the audience mind I must mention a former student of mine who possessed a splendid basso voice. Whenever he appeared on the stage, his audience would snicker at his feet, which were held toes turned far out à la Charlie Chaplin of the screen. Yet this pose was so much a habit that as far as I know he is standing so yet.

A pigeon-toed stance would be as awkward, but the ideal, both walking and standing, is toes straight ahead. While standing, a little

latitude is permitted and the toes may be turned out slightly, but it is wise to think "feet forward."

Arms and hands can help or hinder the artist, depending entirely on whether they seem to be part of the singer or some sort of uncomfortable and bewildering appendages that fit nowhere. First of all, in every case, hands should not fiddle and fingers should not wiggle or fuss. Any movement of the body tends to distract from the singer's performance and the facial expression that puts over the song.

It is not necessary to stand entirely immobile, but for concert work the less the hands and arms are used the better. Emphasis can be gained by clasping of the hands, but only if this is done without any symptoms of "gestures" as they were used in old-fashioned elocution poetry readings.

It is wise for the singer to practice in front of a full length mirror to see just what the most becoming position for the hands and arms may be. Some people look best with arms at sides, some with hands clasped easily before them. But again, whether the hands are to be held high or low depends upon the figure of the performer.

It is best to forget the hands as much as possible, using them only when a gesture is so imperative that it is almost unconscious. A rhythmic clasping and unclasping of the fist, or movement of the fingers in time to the music, is entirely out of order, and such habits should be nipped in the bud by the teacher. Nodding the head to the "beat" of the music is also an annoying movement; the head and hands must be controlled at all times.

The artist's bearing must always imply confidence and poise, for a negative attitude reflects upon the singer's talents and his ability to entertain his audience.

Facial relaxation does not mean the sullen, unpleasant expression that some people seem to acquire when they "relax" their faces. The expression should be animate, but never a grimace. A smile at the right time will work wonders in creating a spirit of amity in an audi-

ence, but a too coy giggle or grin on the stage is absurd behavior for a serious artist.

Sorrow in a song calls for a serious expression, but not a woebegone, hang-dog look. Facial expressions should sustain the mood engendered by the voice itself, but it is very possible to overact with the face, as well as with the hands and arms, on both the operatic and concert stages.

An artist's entrance manner reflects his personality. There are singers, both men and women, who stride on crossing a long stage in a very few steps. They slam themselves into position before the piano and, nodding vigorously in the general direction of the pianist, go to work at singing at once as if to say, "This is my job and I dare the audience to do anything about it!"

There are others who enter inordinately shy, scarcely daring even to smile. They hesitate, and finally, to the relief of the audience, embark upon the program.

Some artists feel that smiles and nods and bows, in answer to any sort of acclaim, is flattery that audiences appreciate. They smirk, nod in deprecation of the applause they are trying to stimulate, and finally settle down to sing. On occasion, this sort of behavior draws sighs of "Oh, how sweet," from a small part of the feminine audience, while it irritates the rest.

A simple, direct manner; a pleasant smile; an unhurried walk; a moment to pull oneself together; and a confident nod to the accompanist are correct for the concert stage. In operatic performances the action of the drama must be the first and foremost consideration.

A singer's behavior at the end of his performance can win him much applause, or check whatever applause he would have had. Applause is a barometer of approval to the audience as well as to the artist, and the singer will do well to encourage as much as possible. Large, incongruous gestures at the end of a song are usually absurd and theatrical, but the mood of the song must always be maintained until the piano reprise is completed. A genial relaxation, and per-

haps a smile, tell the audience that the song is over, and a pleased and happy demeanor in acknowledgment of applause will usually result in more.

A bow can be an awkward jerk, a conceited parody, or a genuine gesture of thanks. The type of bow depends upon the sex and personality of the artist and the place of performance. It would be well if the student would spend some time in front of a mirror practicing a bow that is neither too humble nor too perfunctory.

It is hardly necessary to tell a beginner to leave the stage before the applause has ceased, but many need suggestions on how soon to return for a second bow. Every artist likes to feel that he is so well appreciated that the audience wishes for an encore, and correct timing of the return and the attitude of the singer can make the audience demand more. All these movements should be practiced during rehearsals and in class work. Correct deportment must be second nature to the student so that all his faculties may be reserved for the effort of singing well, despite the nervousness incidental to his first appearances.

Since his appearance is of serious import to the artist, some knowledge of the subject is indispensable to anyone who aspires to a stage career, but considering the number of books written on the subject, everyone can learn at least the rudiments of correct dress very easily.

It is all very well to say that "genius" alone will sway an audience. That may be very true, but why put genius to a doubly hard test? Why handicap it by an unattractive appearance? The top ranking stars who have the strongest claim to genius spend infinite thought upon their apparel, while many beginners, who need all the assistance they can get from any source whatsoever, neglect the first principles of smart attire.

Men's clothes, except in the case of operatic costume, do not permit very much latitude of choice. The correct clothing for each occasion is somewhat prescribed, but for that very reason the correctness for the occasion is essential. There is considerable leeway

in the fit and style of a suit, and if the singer has no recourse to a competent tailor, it behooves him to reflect and investigate prevailing styles and choose one that will enhance rather than detract from his appearance.

Comfort is indispensable to the singer; collar and tie must allow freedom to the throat, but a sloppy look is quite unnecessary. A neat, well-pressed, clean kit is an expression of good taste and good manners; and anyone appearing in public should keep this firmly in mind.

For women, hectic color schemes, distracting flyaway draperies, and fussy details lose all character when seen from the stage and are, from the audiences' point of view, distracting, jejune, and in extremely bad taste. A wise move for any woman who intends to appear in public is to visit a qualified designer or adviser to learn how best to adorn herself from head to foot. The study of stage make-up is very helpful as well.

Operatic performances call for appropriate costume and make-up. The beginning artist often depends upon the opera company wardrobe for his costumes and, to his dismay, finds that the average company wardrobe does not supply outfits that could be called very attractive. It is unnecessarily expensive for the singer to purchase his own costume for a role that is seldom sung, but if a role is to remain in the singer's repertoire for any length of time, it will be found that a personally owned costume is always more comfortable, more sanitary, and more becoming.

Familiarity with costume, props, and make-up is vital to smooth action; strange helmets, trains, capes, swords, beards, and mustaches have broken up many a singer's otherwise excellent performance. The beginner must practice moving about in any novel or unaccustomed type of garment until it holds no horrors for him.

Correct fit of a prop or accessory is urgent. I know one audience that will not soon forget the case of a tenor in *Lohengrin*. Kneeling, head reverently bent, he doffed his helmet, revealing to a soon hilari-

ous audience the ingenious stuffing of newspaper and toweling he had contrived to make the borrowed helmet fit!

Before renting costumes, when this procedure is expedient, the operatic beginner would do well to study the costuming of the people of the period he is to portray.

At my suggestion, two of my students who were to sing the contralto and soprano duet from *Aida* in the Hollywood Bowl went to a well-known costume establishment to rent suitable costumes. Unfortunately the costumes arrived too late for any changes to be made, for the students, with blithe disregard of the historical period, had simply told the costumer's attendant where the scene of the opera took place, and to the amusement of the newspaper critics they appeared in filmy harem trousers and gold-bespangled bodices, a far cry from the ancient Egyptian costume called for by the story!

Smart and appropriate costuming is a tremendous aid to self-confidence and poise, as well as audience approbation. It deserves much more consideration than it usually receives.

CHAPTER NINE

THE SINGER'S HEALTH

*The sensible diet . . . Coddling the voice . . . Tonsillectomy . . .
Too much stress on anatomy of voice . . . The child's voice . . .
An interesting case*

HEALTH! What other asset is so important to the singer? None; for a singer's instrument is himself, and he cannot force it or put undue strain upon it without harmful and lasting results.

The pianist knows that his piano will function properly even though he himself may not be in the best of health, and although illness or fatigue will certainly never permit him to perform at his best, a sufficient exercise of will-power can result in a creditable performance.

But the singer with a raw, strained throat; a stuffy head; or an overwhelming sense of fatigue is so completely handicapped that he is entirely unfit to give a performance.

I have been asked any number of questions about health for the singer, and my advice to all has been, "Live as normal a life as possible." But this precept, apparently, is excessively difficult for the temperamental artist to adopt.

As a student he may have lived in comparative tranquillity, eating the requisite amount of food, sleeping the usual number of hours, and practicing regularly and well. But directly he reaches the glamorous point of being a professional singer, he begins to worry about his health. He begins to take an abnormal interest in his throat and lives in constant dread of colds, sore throat, tonsillitis, fatigue, and "loss of voice."

No one appreciates the anxiety and harm that ill health may cause

more than myself, having spent so many years "back-stage"; but I have observed that very often the pampered life that the average artist lives is, in the long run, as harmful as would be the dissipation he so carefully avoids.

For example, I have known innumerable singers who felt that any sort of physical exercise would harm their voices, especially their top notes, and who for this reason remained too much indoors, traveling only from their couch to the piano, and from the piano to the dining-table. Here they invariably ate far too much, and of the wrong kinds of food, and when this resulted in a distressing corpulence they naively protested that "all great artists were fat!" When these pseudo-great artists became too fat—or too "great"—to breathe or sing properly they turned to teaching.

Strictly speaking, a fine singer is comparable to an athlete, for, like the latter, a singer must remain in constant training if he is always to sing at his best. His muscles, like the athlete's, must be kept in perfect condition by proper exercise, and his general health must be maintained by nutritious diet, adequate rest and relaxation, and a minimum of anxiety or emotional strain.

With the dozens of books regarding diet for health, beauty, or what-would-you-have now on the market, there is little excuse for anyone not knowing what he should or should not eat. My experience has been that nuts, rich cream, sweets, alcohol, and nicotine are prone to irritate the system and therefore the throat, producing phlegm and huskiness. It is up to the individual to omit them from his diet and to avoid the temptation these items afford.

It is well for the vocalist to avoid singing directly after a meal. Besides the fact that a full stomach makes diaphragmatic breathing difficult, the excitement of performing disturbs the digestion. From three to five hours should be allowed for the digestion of food. If a concert or operatic performance is to be given in the evening, most singers prefer dining lightly at about 4:00 P.M. and again, lightly, after the performance.

Some singers feel the need of liquid refreshment during or just before a performance. Indeed, I'll never forget Madame Z, who would not sing unless a raw egg was broken into a glass of sherry, which horrible mess she downed just before she went on the stage. I used to feel that she was still swallowing as she walked out to the foot-lights, and it invariably surprised me that she could at once open her mouth and sing.

Most forms of alcohol produce some throat irritation, and their stimulating effects soon wear off, leaving the singer in a dulled condition during the performance. Thus alcohol in any form is not to be recommended. Cold water is a shock to the throat warm from vocal exercise. Therefore, if the singer feels the need of liquid refreshment, warm but not too hot tea or coffee is usually best. Cream and sugar had best be avoided, as they often prove irritants.

An excessive use of cough drops or lozenges can be harmful, as the sweetness of such pastilles is inclined to bring phlegm to the throat, which, of course, hinders singing. If a cough drop is used, sufficient time should be allowed to assure the singer that his throat will be clear when he starts to sing. A continued use of most similar remedies is harmful to both the throat and the digestion.

Strenuous reducing diets should not be undertaken without a doctor's supervision and advice. Reducing medicines, unless prescribed by a capable doctor, are always injurious to health, and therefore to the voice.

Reasonable exercise, especially in the open air, is vital to every normal person. Too great exertion, over-strenuous games that result in over-heating, exposure, and therefore colds, are ill-advised and must, of course, be avoided. But any number of the popular outdoor games can be played with discretion.

A sufficiency of sleep is necessary to bodily health. Relaxation, particularly before a performance, is important. The high-strung, extremely nervous person (often called temperamental in novels) is too dithery to be a good trouper. In spite of its triteness, the adage

"the show must go on" is true. The ever-ready, as it were, nerveless singer is always in demand. Rest and relaxation bar a nervous crisis. If a nap is to be taken before an evening vocal performance, at least three or four hours should be allotted between the nap and the performance for the singer to put himself at mental and physical par. Few people can sing well immediately upon arising.

Madame D believed that staying in bed the entire day before a performance was helpful. I would make an exception to my rule of giving lessons only in my own studio, and on the days she was to appear I would give her a lesson seated at her bedside. She would sing through an entire role, *mezzo voce*, accompanied by her pianist at the large grand piano that was an important part of her bedroom suite.

An excessive amount of sleep is unnecessary and often is due to laziness rather than physical fatigue. However, I would not advise the behavior of one of my admired friends and erstwhile colleagues. Lack of sleep at night seemed to bother him little, and he enjoyed staying out until extremely late. This annoyed his wife, and her anger somewhat intimidated him. So much so, in fact, that one evening, when after a stag Lambs' Gambol in New York we arrived at my home for a nightcap and more conversation, my wife, fearing burglars, called my name, and my friend snatched his hat, which he had placed on a convenient chair, and departed precipitously. I had to run the length of a long city block to reach him and explain that the rolling pin he expected to descend after the voice was not imminent. His wife seemed to have more consideration for her husband's voice than he did himself.

A vacation, change of climate, and a renewal of outside interests frequently invigorate and refresh a student or singer from a mental as well as physical standpoint. But a long vacation during student days can prove detrimental, for this is a time when the essentials of correct singing are seldom completely fixed in the student's mind, and bad habits are all too easily acquired. In such an instance, con-

siderable work is needed to repair the damage caused by a lapse in training, and this may retard the student's progress for a time.

Short vacations interspersed through the year will not prove harmful. In some cases a complete letdown from singing practice is helpful; in others, brief practice periods keep the student in trim. The professional singer should do some vocalises every day.

Many of the illnesses, trials, and tribulations which the average person suffers are entirely mental. Fears, worries, and nervousness can produce so many ills and aches and pains that mental calm cannot be overestimated or overlooked in speaking of health.

A philosophical and sensible turn of mind is a great asset to a singer. Not only health, but interpretive ability and vocal stability, depend upon the artist's attitude toward life. Temperament is not temper, emotion is not sensuality, sensitivity is not moodiness, ambition must not be based on envy, and to be discerning is not to be supersensitive; yet these qualities are often mistaken so. Would that more musicians realized this!

But a sore throat *is* a sore throat, whatever its cause, and a cold is a nuisance. It is a moot question whether a singer should perform when thus ill. It is quite possible to sing and sound well despite a cold. Unless the throat is actually very sensitive and raw, singing is not harmful. There are times when the vocalist can be so husky and hoarse he can hardly talk, yet after a few moments of correct practice he can sing quite easily and well and feel much the better for it.

With correct head tone and focus it is quite possible to sing "over" many types of colds, and the deep breathing required helps to clear up the head. It is often beneficial to practice some breathing exercises before beginning to sing.

It is not advisable to sing a full concert or opera performance with a bad cold. The entire system is below par at such a time, and the singer will tire too easily to do his best work, while the exertion in this weakened condition can cause complications. But simple vo-

calises, practice and study can be carried on much as usual in spite of a not-too-severe cold in the head.

Continual use of medicated nasal or throat sprays is ill advised. A variety of medicines and panaceas should not be necessary for the person who does not abuse the throat or general health. A nasal douche may be used to wash out the nasal passages in the morning, or when a singer is suffering from a cold. A pinch of salt and a pinch of soda in lukewarm water is efficacious and simple to prepare. Sniffing and strenuous blowing of the nose must be avoided for about ten minutes after a nasal application or douche, as they may direct the matter into the sinus or ear passages and cause great harm.

It is advisable to visit a reputable physician if a cold or sore throat are at all severe or show signs of hanging on. But most singer's sore throats are caused by incorrect singing and no amount of throat swabbing or medicine will eradicate the trouble. Correct voice placement alone will eliminate such sore throat, for usually the voice itself has received no injury.

I have known incompetent and unscrupulous doctors and teachers to advise operations to make someone "sing better." This is absurd, for nothing but good vocal technique will enable one to sing better. But if there is something organically wrong, such as an abnormality or growth in the throat or nose, an operation may be necessary to rectify this, for by benefiting the health it will aid the voice.

A tonsillectomy is often advisable if the tonsils are diseased and become a focal point of infection. Contrary to some popular opinion, the removal of the tonsils does not harm the voice in any way. The fact that some singers do not sing as well after such an operation simply proves that they are not grounded in correct voice placement. The answer to the phenomenon is this: A throat that is practically filled by large tonsils does not allow the tone-breath to escape entirely through the throat; the stoppage of the passage forces some of the sound waves to the head, which gives the tone the desired head resonance. When the tonsils are removed, if the singer does not

understand head tone and focus, the voice sounds white and flat. This is natural, since the crutch, as the tonsils might be called, has been removed, and the singer must now learn correct voice placement.

I have been asked if a student should undergo an operation if his uvula is too long. My answer is yes, but only after a thorough examination by several physicians and at least one competent vocal teacher has proved that the actual physical structure requires an operation. It is dangerous to submit too readily to an operation without proper preliminary investigation as to the absolute necessity for it and the benefits that will follow.

Occasionally a student will ask me, "But what of the anatomy of the voice? How do my vocal cords act, and what do you mean by 'in the head'?" And so on and on.

My answer is, dear student, that the less you worry about your anatomy the better. When a singer begins to worry about his laryngeal pharynx, his oral pharynx, and his aryteno-epiglottidean fold he is creating trouble for himself, for such anxiety will cause a condition of self-consciousness that will do him incalculable harm.

It boils down to this: I love to play golf and I enjoy playing well. To attain a good golf form I go to a teacher. He watches my stroke and says, "You forgot to pivot; try it this way." And he shows me how to hold my feet, how to turn my body without swaying. I try it. He says, "No, you still pull up; stay down and turn your body." I try it again, and pretty soon I'm pivoting correctly. If I keep my eye on the ball, etc., etc., I improve.

My teacher does not say, "The femur moves into the os innominatum which is known as the acetabulum. The capsular ligament limits the extension of the hip-joint, thus giving steadiness to the erect posture"; because if he did I'd find another teacher who would show me *how* to pivot. Knowing the fact that my deltoid muscle is triangular doesn't help me raise my arm in a correct swing, nor does the fact that I have a supinator longus keep me from bending my elbow when I shouldn't.

Too much thought of the physiology of singing defeats its own purpose, in that the singer can often spend too much thought on the mechanics of voice production instead of learning to make the act of singing well a habit that is actually second nature.

The voice teacher must indeed be well versed in the anatomy and structure of the vocal organs, but unless the student is going to be a teacher or doctor, anything beyond knowledge of the fundamentals of the "how" of singing need not worry him unduly. It has been my experience that the hypochondriac is not nearly as ill when he cannot recite the technical names of his illnesses. I have heard singers go into lengthy explanations of their inability to sing; the fact that they felt they knew the whyfore giving them absolution from the penalty of having a poor voice.

Although singing cannot be taught by imitation alone, there is more to the fact that an intelligent listener can learn to imitate correct sounds than most teachers will care to confess.

No matter how cleverly, how aptly, the teacher may phrase his instructions as to the act of singing, no matter how intensive his lecture may become on the subject of the larynx or pharynx, his student will not be able to produce a correct sound *until he has heard one sung*.

In our day of scientific research in physiology, psychology, acoustics, and anatomy there are, as even the most scientific vocal teacher will admit, comparatively few extraordinarily good voices. Could it be that too much science is robbing the singer of the freedom in singing that every artist needs?

Although science and research have given us much—the talking picture, the radio, the telephone, the Voder (speech machine)—I must confess that I fail to see where these scientific attainments have helped to develop the natural beauty that abounds in the human voice.

The talking picture, the radio, and the loud speaker so amplify the voice so as to render it unnecessary to develop it to its fullest

capacity. The Voder may be a modern miracle to the acoustic technician, but it sounds very ugly to me.

Beauty of tone is always truth, and it is such vocal beauty that all sincere singing teachers attempt to impart to their students. As I write this book I am sixty-four, my voice is in perfect condition, and I expect it to remain so until I say my last goodbye. Yet the Bel Canto method that I teach and use is not what might be called "modern" or "scientific"; it is very old, and it has been used with success since its conception.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating; and if one's students sing well, if great singers come to study and *learn to sing better*, what more can one ask of a method? One so-called authority states that a teacher should not be judged by the excellence of the voices of his students. No, indeed, declares this "authority," the teacher should be judged by the fact of whether his students can sing "*until the age of sixty*." This is absurd. Why wait forty years? My students can be judged now, the whole lot of them; those who came to me with fine natural voices, and those who had merely a desire to sing, and who, although everyone said they never would, are singing beautifully right now!

Age should never be a drawback to vocal work or study. Normal individuals should be able to sing as long as they live and enjoy singing during all their active lives.

Small children, from kindergarten days on, should be given instruction in rhythm and a correct musical and melodic sense should be developed in them. But actual study of singing in a grown-up sense is more of a burden than is wise for the average child to carry. Too much emphasis on musical study often has the effect opposite from that desired, creating resentment in the child's mind. A child must be allowed to play, enjoying the freedom of childhood days.

General music study that is not too involved, practice on some musical instrument, and sight reading can be given without harm. History of music, music appreciation, and harmony can be studied

as the child develops. The best results from vocal study will be gained after full growth has been attained.

A boy can begin to study singing before his voice changes, but such voices need careful handling so that the fully developed voice will not be harmed by inferior methods, incomplete knowledge, and bad usage. It is best usually to wait until a boy's voice has completely changed. But, of course, there are exceptions to every rule.

The average girl should not attempt serious vocal study until she is fully matured and equal to the mental and physical effort, some time in her teens.

Both male and female voices grow and develop up to the age of about thirty-five. From thirty-five to fifty-five the voice remains approximately the same and should be at its stage of maximum efficiency, provided the individual is singing correctly. From the age of fifty-five on, the voice deteriorates to some extent, in the same proportion as does the body, but if the singer keeps hale and hearty and the singing method is correct, the voice will probably endure as long as the singer.

I have been asked if deformed persons can sing. The answer, of course, depends on the kind of deformity. But singing and breathing practice have helped many deformed persons to better health. The desire to sing gives such persons an added incentive to improve their health, and constant practice in correct breathing develops diaphragmatic and chest muscles.

Although correct breathing may be difficult at first, breath capacity can soon be doubled or trebled and the student can then sing long phrases and entire songs.

While I was holding master classes in the West one season, an interesting case presented itself. A young lady, badly crippled because of a severe childhood illness, came to me. Her back was bent and her lungs affected. The spirometer registered her breathing capacity at only 75, whereas the normal breathing capacity is at least 200.

After two years of diligent work we were exceedingly pleased to find not only that her breath capacity had increased to 145, but her left lung, which had been abnormally small, was increasing in size and her walk had become much more normal. Another year of work brought her health up to the usual average, and she gave concerts, singing a standard classical repertory. No medical aid was employed; correct breathing and bodily health and happiness was the formula for her successful return to her early healthy state.

So eat, drink, and be merry, but remember that if you are going to sing tomorrow, "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise," to say nothing of putting added color and "oomph" into his voice!

CHAPTER TEN

IF YOU'D RATHER TALK THAN SING

Importance of a well-modulated voice . . . Women's voices too highly pitched . . . Stuttering . . . Lispering . . . Drawling . . . Pointers on public speaking

THE eyes may be the windows of the soul, but it is the voice which is the window—or should we say the show-window—of the intellect. Certain it is that our breeding, education, intelligence, and character are expressed with disconcerting truth, not only by the things we say but *by the way we say them!* It is as incredible as it is distressing to realize that while millions of dollars are spent yearly on clothes and cosmetics, very little time, effort, or money is devoted to the improvement of this one most revealing particular of the personality.

Instinctively, but with cruel accuracy, we judge a new acquaintance by the quality of his voice, his pronunciation, his diction. His social background, his character, and his disposition are immediately revealed in two or three moments' conversation. Moreover, a voice that is carelessly used may give a very bad, yet wholly erroneous impression just when we wish to appear at our very best. For example, the woman with the thin, whiney voice may be striving to suggest sweetness and light, but we instantly class her as a petulant, irritable creature who probably spends her life nagging her friends and family. Many a man uses his voice in such a timid, hesitant manner that his associates invariably class him with the dull and unimportant; yet he may have ideas of immense power and value. The ideas of some persons, however important, rarely achieve realization simply because few of us will lend an ear when a colorless,

monotonous voice begins speaking. Few persons nowadays have the time or patience to "make allowances." We need to be impressed quickly.

I teach singing, not psychology; therefore I cannot tell you *what* to say to make your point, but I do wish to impress upon you, most emphatically, that *what* you say is rarely half as important as *how* you say it!

Consider the matter of inflection and tone color, for example, in the little word "yes":

We can say "yes" crisply, implying that we are alert, and in rather an aggressive mood.

We can say "yes" gently, implying kindness and sympathy.

We can say "yes" laughingly, with a "don't try to fool me" intonation.

We can say "yes?" with an upward inflection suggesting doubt.

We can drawl "yes" with a "don't bother me" suggestion; and by drawling with upward inflection we can suggest innumerable degrees of disbelief, suspicion, and resentment. (Try it!)

"Yes" in a low tone of voice may say, "All right, but I still don't agree with you."

"Yes" with a high inflection expresses joy and happiness. "Yes," loudly says, "I am certain; I am convinced."

"Yes" very softly indicates doubt and uncertainty.

You see what can be done with one small, three-letter word; yet every word we utter can be subjected to such variation of tone and meaning.

The actors and actresses of the stage and screen are enjoyed, primarily, because of the illusion of "naturalness" which they convey. Yet we know that they are not being "natural" when they are portraying a role; they are acting, and in acting the voice is of paramount importance.

A man may be garbed in rags, but if he speaks with a cultivated voice we consider him a well-bred person. On the other hand, a woman may be swathed in sables, but if she has a vulgar voice it stamps her instantly as a common, uncultured person. And since

this is as true in real life as it is on the stage, it behooves every one of us to mind his P's and Q's of speech, and to give the best impression possible.

The principles of good speech are the same, whether employed for business, social conversation, or on the public speaker's rostrum. These principles are correct tone placement, good diction, and precise, clean-cut enunciation.

Voice placement for correct speech is attained even as is placement in singing. Every tone must be covered, have its portion of head resonance, and in speech the rather low voice with a maximum of chest resonance is usually the most attractive.

A low, sonorous, though not affected, voice is effective for both men and women. In fact, most women could lower their voices three to four tones without any appreciable strain and the result would be delightful to hear. The average feminine voice is much too high and completely lacking in "focus," which makes it shrill.

Since the principles of voice placement are the same for both singing and speaking voices, a study of Chapters Three and Four will give the reader the rudiments of correct placement.

There are, of course, other faults in speaking that are unusual for singers. Here are some of them:

*The Whiney Voice**

Women are more prone to this type of error, although men also are occasionally guilty. Even though this type of speech is often the result of a bad disposition, the voices can be helped if the speaker will talk several tones lower, relax the jaw, and enunciate clearly. Special practice stressing round vowel sounds in all words is helpful.

The Sweet and Gushy Voice

This type is almost always too high in pitch; the tones are thin and usually rather flat. Correct tone focus, lowering of the voice,

* Records demonstrating these errors and their correction are available.

and careful controlling of emphasis in statements are the only remedies.

The Hoarse and Husky Voice

If this type of voice is not the result of too much smoking, drinking, dissipation, laryngitis, or throat catarrh, it is caused by tightening of the throat muscles and undue forcing or effort in speaking. A maximum of head tone must be practiced and complete bodily relaxation realized.

The Monotonous Voice

Some people are tone deaf, even as others are color blind. This cannot be helped, and it is extremely difficult to get a tone-deaf person to talk on more than one or, at the most, two pitches. Since they do not hear the difference they can tell only by sensation and have thought little of it. In thirty-nine years of teaching, I have encountered only one individual who actually can be said to be tone deaf. In this instance several experimental lessons offered so little progress that I felt the case to be hopeless. The student could at first distinguish no difference whatever in the tones of a major scale, and only after several hours progressed to the stage where two tones could be differentiated occasionally. The improvement was so slight in comparison to the time and effort involved that singing was conceded a practical impossibility. But the average monotonous voice is not caused by deafness, but by lack of temperament and inspiration in the speaker.

Some speaking voices, even as singing ones, lack the correct amount of vibrato. The remedy is similar, relaxation and a *legato* freedom, plus correct tone focus and chest resonance.

Reading aloud poetry or some exciting tale that demands expression and a variety of tone pitches to give point to the story is good practice for the person with a monotonous voice type. Such practice may sound affected and unnatural at first, but some of the

expression and emphasis will be carried over into everyday speech with good results.

Stuttering

Most afflictions, such as stuttering and stammering, are caused by nervousness. Over-anxious to pronounce his words, the speaker becomes tense. Hurry and nervousness do not allow the vocal muscles perfect coordination. Rigidness of the diaphragm as well as the throat and tongue will cause a stammer or stutter.

Any remedy will be gradual. Concentration, practice, and relaxation will, in the majority of cases, completely eradicate a stutter or stammer. Since tenseness and hurry are the root of the trouble, relaxation and slowing down of all speech will prove most helpful. A phrase should be *sung*, slowly, all on one tone; vowels should be prolonged in every word; consonants uttered with little or no emphasis. Continual and careful practice in this manner will, in most cases, allay whatever nervous tendency may lie at the root of the evil. The habit of slow, singing speech, with prolonged vowels in mind, will rid the stutterer of his fear, and the resultant relaxation will mean the end of the unfortunate habit.

Lisping

A lisp is the result of the tip of the tongue entering between the teeth on the pronunciation of the letter "s." This may be caused by malformation of the teeth, such as prominent upper teeth, a wide gap between the front teeth, or ill-fitting false teeth. The habit can usually be cured, however, if the speaker will hold the upper and lower teeth tightly on edge while pronouncing the offending "s." After sufficient practice the lisp will be cured and the mouth may be relaxed without harm.

The Drawl

This may be an affectation, part of a regional dialect, or simply disinterest and laziness. A slow, rather deliberate, easy manner of

delivery may be attractive if it is not overdone. But vowels must not be unduly prolonged nor broken up to sound as two.

Some drawls are nasal, which tone must be avoided by relaxation of the mouth and jaw, and placement above the nose, not in it. Some result in a blurred enunciation; remedies for this are given further on in this chapter.

The ideal voice is mellow, low enough to indicate depth of character, clear, pleasant, with an attractive, far from strident, carrying quality. It is attained through "focus" (correct placement), correct apportionment of chest and head resonance, and controlled bodily relaxation.

Errors of enunciation are due in most cases to laziness. It is impossible to enunciate clearly when the mouth is hardly opened, the teeth shut, the lips barely moving, unless one has become proficient in ventriloquism. Although word sounds are not entirely formed by the lips, the lips must be mobile and help in the formation of syllables, especially consonants.

The reason that most Americans find it so difficult to speak French with a plausible accent is that few Americans can maneuver their lips sufficiently to produce the correct "eu" and "en" sounds. "R's" and "er's" and "ings" are hideously neglected as well, which produces a sloppy, unfinished impression. I do not mean that every "ing," or "r," or "t," or "s" must be hissed in a sibilant manner or snapped harshly. But there is much to be said for the speaker who gives full credit to every needed syllable.

Vowels in words give the speaker a chance to secure the sonorous roundness so vital to the pleasant speaking voice. Vowels should be given all the pronunciation they can stand, but never broken up as "so-ho" for so, or "go-hoing" for going.

Consonants, given their full value, lend a conciseness and crispness to speech. They make for clarity if pronounced correctly, or for hardness if too violently stressed. Consonants should be clearly defined, but not attacked with undue force. A too-sibilant "s" has

kept many speakers off the radio, for the radio microphone seems to amplify harshly spoken consonants.

Enunciation is particularly important over the air and on the telephone. Misunderstood words may be of great importance, for facial expressions sometimes alter a meaning, and when the face cannot be seen, every word and every tonal quality counts.

Some speakers have the unfortunate habit of starting a sentence with a verve and animation which dies away, so that the end of the phrase or sentence falls flat and fades into nothingness. If a thought is worth speaking, it is worth saying well. The end as well as the beginning of every sentence should be firmly and clearly enunciated.

Correct pronunciation of all words can be found in a dictionary, which presents a course of study open to all. A too-obvious accent, however, may be overcome only with continual practice. Since most people unconsciously mimic voices and accents they hear about them, it is essential for a student to hear cultured speech as much as possible. Motion pictures are an important factor in presenting an accent to many people. Educators are deploring the fact that the industry is not as helpful as it might be if the diction, that is, the manner and style of speech of all actors and actresses, were better.

There is what might be called a cultured American speech that does not seem to belong to any particular part of the country. It is an American adaptation of the English language. Correct American speech does not include a lazy Southern drawl, a New England nasal twang, or a New York neglect of "r," as in "toidy-toid street." Nor is the correct American accent an imitation of the accent known as the "English." There are, as a matter of fact, as many "English" accents as there are American ones. Every language has its dialects. An educated person may know any number of these, yet invariably speak the purest form of his mother tongue because of his cultured background.

To be effective a voice must have adequate expression—the actual tone of the voice should indicate the speaker's meaning, even as his

words declare it, otherwise the effect of sincerity will be lacking. When "I love you" is said in the same tone of voice as "please pass the salt," the words will not be very convincing.

The well-placed voice can, and should, be modulated to express mood. There are gay tones, dull, angry, pleased, annoyed, bored, enthusiastic, or thrilled tones. Even as emphasis gives a sentence punctuation and meaning, so intonation determines the effect of each word.

Public speaking is an extremely interesting subject and deserves the numerous books that have been and will be written on it. It is impossible to give this subject the attention it deserves in the confines of this book, but since most vocalists find it necessary to speak in public at some time or other during their careers, I would like to mention a few basic rules that always should be kept in mind.

The success or failure of a platform talk depends upon the speaker's "style." Style in speaking is similar to style in singing, being the performer's personality, coloring all that is said or sung. But personality is even more obvious in speaking, as it is embodied in the speech as well as in the delivery.

Whatever other merits a speech may have, it will indeed have *one* if it is brief. A long-winded discourse defeats its purpose, because after a certain time audience attention wanders. The speech may be interesting and worth-while, but the average listener cannot concentrate over-long, particularly when the same voice goes on and on. It is infinitely better to "put over" a few points and really drive them home than to touch on innumerable facts and have them all go vaguely in one ear of a lethargic audience and out the other.

To keep an audience alert, sentences must be short and to the point. "Er's," "ah's," "ands," and "eh's" tend to draw out a sentence and rob a speech of its definition and coherence.

The "tempo" of a speech can either lull an audience to sleep or keep it alert and interested. A too-speedy delivery, though full of vivacity and spirit, does not allow an audience sufficient time to

digest words and ideas; consequently important portions of the discourse may be lost. On the other hand, by speaking too slowly, the speaker will lose the lively interest of the audience as long, irrelevant pauses allow the attention to wander.

Tempo should be varied according to the quality of the statements made. An important point should be delivered slowly, and with emphasis. Amusing or somewhat incidental sentences should be said more quickly, and in a somewhat higher pitch. As soon as a speaker feels that the attention of his audience is leaving him, he can retrieve it at once by speaking in a louder, faster tone, using a good deal of emphasis to drive home a point. This mannerism must be used with discretion, as too frequent use will make a speech jerky, and unless the speech continues in an interesting fashion, the audience will find attention unrewarded and the faster tempo, repeated, will not succeed in regaining their regard.

The most satisfactory tempo, then, is one that suits the subject and allows the audience sufficient time to understand, yet does not drag.

A sense of "timing" is another quality essential to a successful speaker. Timing of a speech includes tempo with the addition of effective pauses. A pause must have meaning, else it simply indicates that the speaker cannot collect his thoughts sufficiently to go on. As a matter of fact, pauses do give the speaker time to marshal his thoughts, but a definite pause is allowable only if the point is dramatic enough to call for some time to let the statement sink into the minds of the auditors, or if a rhetorical question is asked and the speaker wishes to have the audience frame an answer in their own minds. If a joke calls for a laugh, experience will teach a speaker just how long a pause can last to be effective. But it should be remembered that the persons in the last rows of a large audience receive their impressions perhaps a fraction of a second later than those in front. A large audience is generally slower in understanding, and the entire tempo of a speech should be slower, more deliberate,

and more obviously pointed than for a smaller, more intimate gathering.

To be effective, every discourse must have a climax as a whole, as well as several minor climaxes. The wise speaker saves his most dramatic moments to the last; an anti-climatic ending in a speech is as bad as a similar ending to a fascinating story. It leaves the audience a little bored, wishing the speaker had sense enough to stop while he was still interesting, as well as a little vague as to the importance of the points presented.

Some slang phrases are amusing and apt, and have their place in an informal speech, but constant use of such words or phrases lowers the whole tenor of a talk, gainsaying the erudition and education of the speaker. Slang and humor should be used only if they will drive home a point.

Humor is an effect in speech-making that must be handled with extreme care. To quote the words of a former motion picture producer, "Making comedies is no joke!" A funny story must really be amusing to the majority of the audience; it must be the type of joke or story they can well appreciate, and it must have an essence of novelty. For a joke that misses fire is deadly, often upsetting the speaker's equilibrium and causing the audience to feel that the entire speech is missing its point.

Indeed, when a speaker attempts to inject humor into a public address he is risking his reputation as a speaker, because few things are so derogatory to an orator's success as futile efforts to be funny. To be witty is to be entertaining, but, alas! all speakers are not witty! Unless the speaker has the ability to be witty and amusing in ordinary conversation, he would be well advised to make no attempts to inject humor into his speeches.

Stage deportment for the speaker is so similar to that of the singer that I will not go into it here. Full discussion of this subject will be found in Chapter Eight.

No one can expect to become a distinguished orator overnight.

Experience, practice, and study are necessary to success in speaking, as in every other profession, yet every person can improve and will indeed find it profitable and beneficial to enlarge his conversational powers. Incidentally, I frequently wonder why so few teachers of classes in public speaking pay so little regard to the voice, *per se*. Their lessons seem to be concerned wholly with *what* the person is to say in his address, rather than *how* he is to say it, and never by any chance is the student taught how to project his voice and make sure that he will be heard. Yet to what avail is a fine speech if the speaker's voice has reached only those within a radius of a few feet?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A CHAPTER FOR TEACHERS

How I became a teacher . . . Do's and don'ts . . . Wrongly classified voices . . . Amusing experiences . . . Working rules . . . The charity pupil problem . . . Impatient parents

“**B**UT you mustn’t write a book about your methods of teaching,” cried a friendly colleague in dismay. “If you explain your secrets, every other teacher will be able to use them himself!”

“And why not?” I replied. “Besides, I haven’t any secrets. There’s no mystery about my method, nor that of any other teacher worthy of the name. The only secret lies in the teacher’s skill, his ability to hear, criticize, and suggest remedial measures.”

This chapter, therefore, is dedicated to teachers, and especially those younger ones just embarking upon their careers. But instead of describing my method—which I hope I have already done in earlier chapters—I would like to recount some of the odd and interesting incidents which have occurred to me in my forty years of teaching.

So thoroughly do I enjoy teaching that now, in looking back, I cannot understand why I did not originally choose to be a teacher instead of a singer. I loved singing, passionately, and it was because of my insatiable desire to learn as much as possible about it that I abandoned it completely and turned instead to teaching. It came about in the following manner.

After graduating from the Imperial Vienna Conservatory I was engaged by the Charkoff Opera Company to sing a season of grand opera at Charkoff, under the leadership of the famous conductor, Steinberg. After this engagement I went on a concert tour with the

celebrated Esther Adaberto. At the conclusion of this tour I discovered I had amassed more money than I had seen in years, and my first thought was, "How shall I spend this great sum?" The answer was, "By doing the two things I want most." These were to travel in Switzerland and to study with the famous Italian maestro, Chevalier Augusto Brodgi, the teacher of most of the famous singers of that day. The two desires dovetailed perfectly, as Maestro Brodgi was summering in Switzerland that year, so off I went in high spirits.

That summer was a revelation. Maestro Brodgi was an inspiration to us all, and every moment away from his studio seemed wasted. I followed the maestro to Milan when he returned there in the fall.

I was so interested in my own lessons that I found myself equally interested in the lessons of the other students as well. I finally plucked up enough courage to ask Maestro Brodgi if I could possibly "sit in" on other lessons he gave; hearing him teach others would help me immeasurably, I explained.

My enthusiasm must have pleased this great man, for he graciously allowed me to remain through almost all of his lessons, explaining to the students that I was there to hear his teaching methods with the idea of becoming an instructor myself. The idea had not actually entered my head until that point, but directly he mentioned it the thought took hold in my mind. To be able to teach as Brodgi, that would be heaven indeed!

The next two years were divided between operatic performances in Russia and the maestro's studio, where, still filled with curiosity, I listened in on lessons as often as I was able. When a splendid full season of operatic performances in Russia was offered, I accepted with what might be called regret, for it meant a long absence from the Brodgi studio.

When I finally left, Maestro Brodgi presented me with a diploma from his studios, the diploma of a teacher, in recognition of my complete knowledge and understanding of his method.

The opera season in Charkoff, Kiev, and Odessa proved glamorous and interesting, but not very lucrative. Consequently, when the head of the vocal department of the Odessa Imperial School died and I, as a teacher of the Brodgi method, was offered his place, I was delighted to accept. My performances at the opera kept on, but I found during the next year that I became much more interested in teaching than in singing, and when it finally came to a choice of which course to follow permanently, I did not hesitate for a moment. I enjoyed teaching, and my students' success pleased me even more than my own.

Whatever success I have gained in this lifetime of teaching I credit to the fact that I was able to learn both practice and theory of singing through my "sitting in" on Chevalier Brodgi's lessons. I was able to hear and finally understand the reasons for the variety of instruction he gave, and when I began to teach I realized that voice instruction demands analysis to the last degree. A continual fault finding—in a pleasant manner, of course—"a little more breath for that phrase, a bit more focus and head tone there, a lighter quality here, more roundness there," etc., etc., until the goal is reached.

Every teacher realizes that no two pupils can be treated alike. Yet in many cases the instruction one hears in a studio differs not one whit whether the voice being trained is a coloratura or a basso. Up to a certain point all students may sing the same exercises in ranges suited to their voices, and of course all instruction strives for the same purity and placement of tone. But the instruction that each student receives must be suited to his voice, his particular faults, foibles, and mentality.

There are no simple voice teaching rules that will conquer all difficulties. A multitude of personal qualities enter into any type of teaching or study. A teacher must love to teach, and he must have the aptitude to inspire his students with a genuine love of song.

It is true that a mediocre voice can never become an extraordinary one, no matter how hard a teacher may work. But correct placement,

musicianship, and interpretation can make a mediocre, small, or limited voice at least acceptable and worth hearing. So much the teacher must give, the intelligent student accept.

I understand the principle by which an automobile runs, but when I am stalled out on the desert, I want a mechanic who knows how to put a motor together and who can tell at a glance what is wrong with my stalled engine. It has been my experience that many teachers, particularly those just starting out on their careers, know a good tone when they hear one, even as I know that my car is running well. But when these teachers try to make a voice better, when a voice is stalled on a desert of ignorance, they seem to lack the knowledge to get it on its way.

Perhaps, my dear young teacher, some of these simple suggestions may strike a forgotten chord.

Simplify your student's problems by learning what vowel each student finds it easiest to sing. For instance, some work easily with the vowel "ee," while others find this the most difficult vowel with which to attain tone focus.

The student must first grasp the principles of tone "focus" and "point" on the vowel simplest for him, in conjunction with the "ung-oah" exercise suggested in Chapter Six, and then must strive for the same sensations while singing all other vowels, and vowel and consonant combinations.

Remember that the singer's mouth and lips must always be mobile and relaxed, so that they can adjust themselves to the change called for in the pronunciation of words. Correct tone placement, however, must go on, regardless of the change of the shape of the mouth or lips, as the tone is formed behind the front of the face, and without any help from it.

To assure lip relaxation and to avoid the difficulties that arise when a beginning student starts on repertoire, present simple vocalises and exercises from the very first, using easily pronounced

words such as "Caro Mio Ben" or "Love is Mine" to the very simplest of arpeggios.

Be sure that all voice types under your supervision practice scales. Scales achieve and maintain requisite vocal flexibility, and are just as necessary for low voices as high ones. The scale, however, should be attempted only by the advanced student who is sure of voice placement so that the tones will not be slurred. A few difficult vocalises should be practiced every day to promote vocal agility.

See to it that beginning students do not form bad vocal habits between lessons. It is often best to advise abstinence from practice for the first few weeks that a new student is under one's guidance. It is advisable for such a student to have as many lessons as possible per week until the correct method of voice placement is definitely established in his mind. When this is accomplished, the student will be able to practice alone without any harmful consequences. The experienced singer seldom heeds such advice, although it has been my experience that he needs it as much as the novice.

A vocal lesson should last from twenty to forty minutes. An hour of steady vocalizing tends to tire the average student and the last minutes accomplish nothing. The teacher also is under a constant strain, and an over-long lesson sometimes does more harm than good. If, however, the lesson is divided into two periods, one for vocalizing and the other for repertoire, an hour's work is quite satisfactory. In this manner, both placement and repertoire advance together and the student and teacher do not tire of either. It is often best to divide an hour's work into two distinct periods, one in the morning and another in the afternoon, or to allow a rest period of some duration during the lesson if it is continuous.

If a student tells you that he finds practicing *mezzo voce* fatiguing when studying repertoire, beware! The act of singing must be carried out correctly at all times; tone focus, relaxation, and breath control should eliminate strain.

When a teacher, endeavoring to impress the importance of tone

focus and head resonance on a student repeats the words "head tone" time and time again, some students feel that head tone is all that interests the teacher and often ask, "Can there be too much head tone in a voice?" Every tone must have its portion of head resonance, but tones that are all head tone—in other words, lacking in correct diaphragmatic breath support—become falsetto.

As a matter of fact, many extremely high notes sung by coloraturas are practically falsetto tones, but to make them correct singing tones, they must have breath and diaphragm support. Some tenors make all extremely high notes falsetto tones, since they lack voice and breath support, and these singers must change from this falsetto placement to another as they descend the scale. Such tones are not actually part of the voice or part of the singer's range, but trick notes. Practically anyone can sing falsetto—if you call it singing—but the true high voice must have a body and depth that is never found in falsetto alone.

Remember that a jaw that shakes does not mean a jaw that is relaxed. Instead, it is a sure indication that there is extraordinary tenseness at the back of the jaw, and in many cases a stiffened pulling back of the tongue. Complete relaxation is the only cure for such a habit.

Other forms of nervous body rigidity are not always so easy to find. A certain student's voice showed definite improvement after a few lessons, but I was not satisfied. I was confident that this young lady was not entirely relaxed, although she repeatedly assured me that she was. Finally she said, "Don't laugh, but although I feel that I am entirely relaxed vocally, the big toe on my right foot becomes so stiff when I sing that it is hard for me to walk away from the piano." It sounds absurd, yet strain and tenseness anywhere will have an effect on the voice. The big toe was finally relaxed by allowing the lady to sit, walk, move about, with or without her shoes, so that she might feel entirely free. Her voice immediately began to improve at a much faster rate than formerly.

Weird questions are put to all teachers; one of those put to me strikes me as amusing. I was asked if a long tongue was a handicap in the pronunciation of vowels. In all my experience I have never heard of a singer with a tongue long enough to interfere with his singing. Even an average tongue may be dangerous if indiscreetly wagged in conversation, but no tongue should interfere with vocalization. In fact, the tongue should be mentioned as little as possible to the student, as indiscriminate suggestions may cause the unconscious stiffening of that member.

Any number of strange case histories come to my mind; discussion of them may serve to clear up some of your problems.

Sore Throats

A young soprano came to my studio one day, declaring that although she had studied with many famous teachers, and in several well-known conservatories, she was unable to sing as she constantly suffered from sore throat. It did not take me long to realize that her voice quality was that of a contralto, albeit one with a splendid range. In her efforts to sing as a soprano, apparently with the approbation of all her former teachers, she was straining her throat so badly as to make herself actually ill. As soon as she relaxed and sang easily with her normal voice, all her sore throat disappeared.

A young tenor, who also suffered from sore throat, declared that he could sing only once a week, and would afterwards be hoarse for several days. I found that he was not a tenor, but actually a dramatic baritone. By raising his chin and his glottis, and straining the muscles of his throat, he was able to reach his high notes. When he lowered his head to a natural position, relaxed, practiced correct breath support, and attained tone focus, his voice became richer, fuller, and all soreness of throat vanished.

A lady who admired low voices and had studied as a mezzo soprano came for a voice trial one day. She was very discouraged, since whenever she sang, her glottis pained her. It seemed that she

had no idea of head tone or tone focus, and as soon as she began to sing in a lighter fashion, she was able to reach high notes that had been beyond her range before. Forcing and straining to keep her voice deep and full caused her pain and detracted from the true beauty of her voice.

As a matter of fact, one of the highest voices I have ever taught belonged to a young lady who was taught to sing as a mezzo soprano before she came to study with me. Her former teacher's complete ignorance of correct tone focus meant that the young lady was forced to sing within a very limited range, where absence of head tone would not be so noticeable. In fact, many students have come to me as mezzo sopranos and baritones because their former teachers did not know how to develop the high notes which would have made them the sopranos or tenors they should have been.

Mistakes in range and voice types of students on the part of incompetent or too opinionated teachers have ruined more talented singers than almost all the other errors of singing combined. Every teacher would be well advised to reserve passing judgment upon the range and type of a singer's voice immediately upon hearing one song sung. The type of voice can be accurately judged only after the voice is correctly placed with proper breath support and focus, and when the student is singing naturally, free from strain or nervousness.

It is my contention that every student should have a voice trial before he is accepted for a course of lessons. A voice trial is important, for it tells the instructor the type of material he will have to work with and indicates the student's study and improvement capabilities to some extent. Naturally, every teacher has a sincere desire to help all those who wish to sing, but there are cases that are hopeless. It is wicked to encourage a singer who can never attain his desire of success.

So the primary question of a voice trial is, "Why do you want to sing? Are you interested in singing for your own pleasure, or do you expect to make a career with your singing voice?"

The number of aspiring singers who wish to make careers without adequate background of voice and personality is appalling. But it is equally appalling to realize the number of teachers who will accept them without telling them that, although they may be able to sing, it is improbable that they will attain great success by their voices alone.

It is sometimes discouraging to find that a student who has been thus turned down has gone to another teacher and been accepted in spite of his lack of necessary qualities. For the honor of our profession it seems dreadful that any student should be so fooled, even though he may well deserve it.

I refuse to tell anyone that I think they will be able to make good unless I sincerely think so. And in this vein, an amusing incident happened in my studio one day in New York. A woman came in for a voice trial. She announced that she was in New York to study singing. She had come from one of the Southwestern states and she wanted to find a good, honest teacher. Yes, she expected to make a career of singing. I heard her and I looked at her and my heart sank. I would have to be cruel. It was the only way to be kind, and I told her as gently as I could to go home. "I am sure you will find plenty of good teachers," I told her, "but you will be wasting your time. Your voice needs too many years of work. You should have started sooner." She was startled.

"You mean you won't teach me?"

"I'm sorry."

"But I'll go to another teacher. Any number will take me!"

"Perhaps."

"But I have gone to several. They say I should study."

"I don't think you should, that is, with a career in mind."

And then, to my surprise, she beamed, "That's fine!" She left in high spirits.

There are so many strange characters wandering about this world that I soon forgot her and her weird behavior entirely. Then one

day, a few weeks later, a young man arrived in town. My secretary told me he had written to arrange for a series of lessons, sight unseen.

He arrived for his voice trial, seemed to know what he was about, and his voice was excellent. As he was leaving I asked how he happened to come to me. He grinned engagingly and said, "My sister came to New York to find an honest teacher. She went to several, but you were the only one who told her in no uncertain terms that she shouldn't attempt a singing career. She decided that you were really sincere; you see she knew she didn't have the voice or personality or appearance. She was only trying to find a teacher for me."

I have never had such an experience repeated. For the average procedure is to go to the teacher who promises the most golden future, without any "ifs," regardless of whether that prophecy is sensible or not.

On the other hand, it is difficult to say that someone will or will not be able to sing after studying. But it is up to the qualified ear of the instructor to hear not only the voice as it sounds today, but also what training can do for it. And there are times when one teacher will hear what others do not.

I had not been teaching long in Russia when a young lady came in for a voice trial. She had a sad story to tell. She wanted to sing, felt that she could, but unfortunately she was the only one who felt that way about it.

I heard her sing, thought she had the personality and intelligence needed, so, positive of my ability to create voices and full of enthusiasm that approximated hers, I assured her that she could and would sing, in spite of the dictums of other teachers. May I add that much to the surprise of everyone, including the young lady herself, she became a very famous singer indeed.

It is possible, of course, to err in judging a voice, and since we are all prone to error, it is best to avoid declarations one cannot be sure of when hearing a singer or student for the first time. I have heard

baritones who with a little development of overtone blossomed into tenors with thrilling high C's, and I have heard pseudo-lyric sopranos turn into glorious contraltos.

There are voices that to the uninitiated sound like so much croaking which can, with correct training, become wonderful instruments, and of course there are excellent voices that surprisingly enough never develop beyond mediocrity. I maintain that the reason for this is not lack of voice, but lack of intelligence and ambition on the part of the singer, or incompetence on the part of the teacher. For intelligence means more than voice.

For example, I had not been in America very long when I was introduced to a very important man at a dinner party. In the usual American fashion of the time, he sneered at the idea of singing and singing teachers and called all musicians "bluffers." "You teachers get a good voice," he said, "and when that person makes a success you take the credit. But when a poor voice comes your way, you can't do anything with it. Bah! You can't teach singing, any of you. You can just talk it and rob poor innocent people of their money."

This was in the nature of a challenge, and I told this man so. "I can make anyone who is passably intelligent and not tone deaf sing."

"If you can make my daughter sing, I'll believe you," he said, and laughed uproariously. I had never met the daughter and I was taking a long chance, as it would be hard to tell a father that his daughter was not intelligent, but I really meant what I said, so I pounded my fist on the table, even as he had done, and said, "I can!"

"All right," said Mr. X, "I'll make a bet with you. My daughter isn't tone deaf, and she's rather intelligent. But she can't sing. She wants to, though, heaven only knows why. If you can make her sing, I'll pay you for every lesson she takes; but if you don't make her sing so that it sounds half way pleasant, you don't get a cent."

"Done!" said I, cheerfully, though wondering what I had let myself in for.

The next day she came to the studio. There was no doubt about the veracity of her father's statement. She couldn't sing. Her voice was small, very limited range, and she sang off key as often as not.

But she was a clever girl, and she could take instruction. We worked hard. She studied until she could speak Italian with ease. She practiced until she knew the standard repertoire, both prima donna and lesser roles. She practiced until one day she sang, and what is more, *she sang well*.

The day she got her first engagement—it was for a series of concerts as an assisting artist to a very famous singer—her father paid me for all the lessons, and I must admit the payment was deserved. But my greatest payment came when, in Italy, I heard her sing as the prima donna of some of the most important opera houses of the country, and heard the critical Italian audience give her heart-warming ovations.

Her voice was never very large, but through constant training and intelligent application it became so clear and perfectly placed that success was hers for many years, and still is. Now that she is older, she is doing well as a teacher.

Although it is a great pleasure to work with a fresh, unspoiled voice, I sometimes think the experience of salvaging a wrecked voice and restoring it to its original loveliness is even more gratifying. It is a much greater test of the teacher's knowledge and skill, and is naturally much more difficult; but the ultimate achievement is such indisputable proof of the teacher's ability that it is worth all the time and effort that it entails.

While I have had this experience innumerable times, I can recall no more outstanding example than the case of a well-known soprano. This singer studied with me over a period of seven years. She had studied with other teachers prior to coming to me, and because of her magnificent natural voice, she had become a prima donna of first calibre.

Her first seasons in New York and with the Chicago Civic Opera

Company had been sensationally successful, but later she began to receive increasingly unpleasant criticisms. Musical authorities were unanimous in their declarations that she was pushing and forcing her voice, that its beautiful quality had completely gone, and that the days of her professional career were numbered.

At first she refused to take heed. She was openly advised to go into temporary retirement, to seek help, in short to *study* and win back her voice if possible. But to all such advice she turned a deaf ear.

One can readily understand this. She had made a great name. She had a great voice—and she had also a great pride. She could not risk her professional standing by going meekly to a singing teacher at this point in her career. Such admission of failure was unthinkable.

But things grew worse; critics were now openly hostile, and drastic action was imperative. Unless help came quickly, the great career would be over forever.

It so happened that some of the singers at New York's Metropolitan Opera were studying with me, and when this singer and her husband arrived for their New York season, their friends recommended my work so highly that she asked me to call upon her.

I did so, and after a brief interview, the famous *diva* decided that she wanted to study with me, but told me frankly that her professional pride would hardly allow her to come to the studio as an ordinary student, permitting other pupils to hear and perhaps criticize her. For a few moments we were at a deadlock, for with my own over-crowded schedule I could not afford to spend valuable time going back and forth to her hotel. Finally we compromised by arranging that Madame should come to the studio more or less incognito, and that no one was to see her while there. My secretary was reluctantly permitted to remain at her post, but not my accompanist, Madame preferring to bring her own.

Naturally, my students soon discovered that the great artist was working with me, and soon the critics also graciously noted her

improvement and made glowing mention of it in their reviews. So, feeling that if they could hear a famous singer having a lesson they too might benefit from it, some of my pupils used to huddle behind a screen in the ante-room and listen. There they heard the famous one being told much the same things as they were told in their own lessons, such as, "Retain your head resonance on the descending tones, too," "Think of your diaphragm," "Higher placement, Madame," or "Open the mouth."

Their naughty little scheme was discovered one day when the screen fell with a crash, but by this time her voice had improved so astonishingly that she was too happy to be angry, and she kindly permitted them to remain while she continued her lesson. (But this time I tactfully did not interrupt nor correct.) Later my pupils told me confidentially that they had learned a great deal from their vantage point behind the screen, and that the experience had proved to them that the willingness to accept criticism cheerfully was more important than maintaining a false dignity.

Another student of mine had an interesting psychological make-up. Like many young men of his mental type, he liked to have every statement proved to him. I do not blame such persons, and this young man, like many another, had studied with a great number of teachers and had found most methods incomplete and unsatisfactory. Therefore he wanted always to be certain and to know the why and wherefore of everything. Even when I proved to his own satisfaction that certain suggestions improved his singing, he was not content until he knew *why*. Often when he would sing easily and beautifully a previously unattainable A-flat, he would shrug his shoulders and protest, solemnly, "Yes, that's fine. But it won't count until I can sing it on the stage as well and as easily as I do here in your studio!" Later, during his concert tours, it made me very happy to receive letters from him telling me that what I had taught him had proved successful and had passed the test of public performances.

Another highly interesting pupil was a noted negro baritone. He approached me one night in the lobby of the Metropolitan Opera House and asked if I would give him an audition. He explained that he wanted to be a singer but wasn't sure that he had a voice or talent enough. If not, he wanted to study medicine.

"I don't believe in wasting time, neither yours nor mine," I replied, "so let's go up to my studio right now and find out."

His voice was glorious and it was backed by a fine intelligence, so we began his lessons immediately.

When he was ready for his formal debut, I arranged a New York recital for him, and to make sure that the important critics and press correspondents would attend, I personally called upon them and asked them to do so. Anyone not living in New York can hardly appreciate the overcrowded schedule of that city's music critics; there are four or five principal concert halls, as well as a number of lesser ones, and during the winter music season they are given over to an average of two performances a day, matinee and evening. That makes an average of eight or ten concert events per day. In addition to these there are the regular performances of the Metropolitan Opera, with perhaps an occasional season of lesser or visiting opera companies at one of the other theaters.

Naturally no critic can attend all of these events, so each one goes to whichever he considers the most important, and sends his assistant to the lesser ones. Even so, a critic rarely can remain to hear the entire performance. Instead, he hears one group of songs at Aeolian Hall, hurries over to hear a second at Town Hall, thence he taxis to Carnegie Hall to hear at least one movement of a symphony, and then, perhaps, back to the Metropolitan to hear the last act of an opera.

Under such conditions a debut recital by an unknown singer cannot hope for serious consideration. Therefore, because of my great faith in the young man, I was determined to do all in my power to induce the critics to hear him. Fortunately, most of them were per-

sonal friends of mine, but when I told them the concert's date, they protested that it was also the date of a special performance of Feodor Chaliapin, and this they positively could not miss. However, they would drop in on the boy's recital for a few minutes, they promised, warning me in the same breath that their reviews would have to give almost the entire space to the Chaliapin performance, with maybe a paragraph to my unknown pupil. After all, Chaliapin was Chaliapin, while my pupil was ————?

They kept their word. They came. And they heard such superbly beautiful singing that there was never again a question mark in anybody's mind when that singer's name was mentioned. Instead of the paragraph which they had promised me, they gave him more than half the space they had reserved for Chaliapin, and so glowing was their praise of my pupil that his career was launched, triumphantly, upon the reviews of this first brilliant recital.

Years ago I drew up a set of "working rules" for the teacher which I had found very useful, and I give them herewith:

1. Make your students like you.
2. Be sure your students trust you and your method.
3. Acknowledge that your students may grow beyond you some day; give them leeway; keep an open mind.
4. Put all the pleasure and inspiration you get out of your own singing into your teaching.
5. Do not promise miracles in a short time. As you and your students are not infallible, it is best to make haste slowly.
6. Encourage helpful mental and physical habits in your students. Accuracy, initiative, ambition will make your students famous, and yourself as well.
7. Be vitally interested in your students' work, and they will be vitally interested in your instruction.
8. Give them the best you have.

I have found that there are unfortunate cases when student and teacher are simply not congenial, although each may, in his own way, be competent and sincere. When this happens, student and teacher

criticize each other unduly, because they don't understand each other and their temperaments are unsuited.

In such cases I really think it is best that they part, for the student will learn elsewhere with a teacher more suitable to his personality, and the teacher, who is probably eminently successful with other students, will be spared the unhappiness that inevitably results when a student does not progress under his guidance.

The competent teacher does all he can to stimulate confidence in his students. For lack of confidence in a teacher can completely undo any good instruction that may be offered. A teacher cannot give a voice. He can only teach as far as the student is able and willing to comprehend and accept.

If many a student who bewails slow improvement were to analyze his own case, he would find that he himself is his worst handicap.

We would say that anyone who continually went to a restaurant and ordered a full and expensive meal, and then didn't eat it, was mad. Yet many students think they are being smart if they go to a teacher, pay for their lessons, yet do not accept or put to any use the instruction they receive. I have known students who studied with two teachers at one time, with the idea that what they received from one would supplement the instruction from the other, or perhaps one would nullify the other's harmful instruction. This is absurd as well as disloyal, and such a student is best out of any serious teacher's studio.

A student who cannot take criticism is wasting both time and money. Yet tears and sulks and anger are so often the answer to criticism that one wonders whether singers are especially sensitive people or if they have perhaps confused the word temper with temperament. The only course, in such a case, is to have a serious talk with the student to find out just where the trouble lies. This talk will often clear up matters of method or criticism, and make the atmosphere between the student and teacher infinitely more comfortable.

There comes a time in the life of every teacher when a student arrives for a voice trial and discloses a splendid voice. Excited and happy at the prospect of having the chance to work with such fine material, the teacher lets himself go . . . "Yes, indeed, you should study. I feel sure that if you persevere there is no end to the success you can achieve," and so on. Then the blow falls!

"If I have such possibilities," says the student, "why not teach me free of charge? I will repay you when I start to make money."

And then, of course, when the experienced teacher, who has lived through many similar and disillusioning experiences, says "No," the student is quite convinced that the teacher exaggerated his possibilities simply to acquire another student.

If the teacher has the time and will tell himself in no uncertain terms, "I will work with this student just for the love of it; no reward expected, for no reward will be received," well and good. But it is fatal for the teacher to expect gratitude; it just doesn't work out that way.

Indeed, although a teacher may believe very firmly in a student's prospects, what guarantee does he have that the student will persevere? Human beings are fallible. Although a voice may develop beyond fondest expectations, there are so many personality traits that may stand in the way of success. And even if the student does make a career, what guarantee does the teacher have that the student will not repudiate the teacher? This happens with discouraging frequency, and among some of our most distinguished artists as well as the lesser ones. Some teachers have recourse to contracts, but contracts can be broken and usually are, and the too trusting teacher discovers, once more, that if he expected praise or reward, he has simply wasted his time. When singers make good, they seldom like to give credit to anyone but themselves.

If a student is truly in earnest and really wishes to study, he must make his own arrangements, pay for his lessons, and thus appreciate them all the more. Scholarships tend to weaken morale. Tell your

students they must keep their independence and make good on their own.

It has always seemed interesting to me that although a student mentally may grasp the method theory as presented by the teacher, true vocal improvement does not come until the student's subconscious mind has fully accepted the new order of things.

A student may say, "Yes, I understand—No, I have no questions," day after day, and the voice may improve slowly on the right track, but without spectacular success. Then all of a sudden, during a routine lesson, a strange expression comes into the student's eyes and he says, "Oh, *that's* what you meant." And the sudden facility that he attains seems nothing short of miraculous.

I have found usually that improvement will be first gradual, then startling, then gradual again, as every few months certain fundamentals sink in and another step in the art of singing has become subconscious, thoroughly learned, and thus put into practice.

It is for this reason that, although a method of singing may be elucidated in a very few pages of writing, or a few minutes of conversation, proficiency is the result of many years of practice. A singer's success thus depends upon the wise guidance and surveillance of his teacher, who must lead him beyond fundamentals, the while assuring unchanging excellence through regard for basic principles.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words upon a subject which is seldom mentioned but which, I am convinced, has much to do with any student's success or failure as any of his personal qualities or defects. This is *the attitude of his parents or financial sponsors toward his training*.

If a teacher tells a parent that the important foundation work—correct voice placement, without which no voice can do its finest work—requires from two to three years of careful work on the part of both teacher and student, the parent is aghast. He cannot believe it. The teacher must be a bandit! Of course, it is admitted that

painters, sculptors, writers, dancers, artists of any other kind must study intensively for years before their work can expect public acclaim, but singing . . . ? Ah, that's different!

There is an old adage which says, "Time respects nothing made without its aid," and certainly this is true of the singing voice. That such a voice must be built and developed, as well as *trained*, is not taken into account by the fond parent. If his son or daughter cannot make a brilliant debut after one year's training, "there must be something wrong with the teacher," in which case the student is withdrawn from that studio and enrolled elsewhere, with someone who dishonestly promises quicker results.

Since a successful pupil is a teacher's finest advertisement, is it reasonable to suppose that this teacher would prefer to hide such a pupil in the obscurity of the studio any longer than is strictly necessary? Yet many a parent is convinced that the teacher is deliberately holding John or Mary back simply because he wants to wring as much money as possible from him, overlooking the fact that after every successful pupil's debut a teacher acquires a dozen new students to fill the graduates' place.

In order to hold the pupil's interest and retain the parents' good will, even the teacher of soundest integrity is obliged to compromise. Not only is he unable to insist upon a high standard of singing, but he must permit the immature young voice to learn, as quickly as possible, the trashy "popular" songs with which he may impress some agent who will find him some sort of singing job and thus appease the vanity of the fond parent.

This parental ignorance is one of the major reasons for the success of those many incompetent teachers who say very little of their own qualifications, but who fraudulently advertise that they place their pupils in professional engagements after only a few months' training. That their statements will not bear thorough investigation does not occur to the gullible reader. The latter merely reads these false statements and, feeling that "it must be true or the paper wouldn't

print it," decides that a teacher whose pupils advance as fast as that is exactly what he wants.

Since no young, undeveloped voice can stand the strain of public singing under adverse conditions, and since few singers continue studying after professional work begins, it is easy to see why so few promising voices last long enough to fulfill their promise.

The solution to this is simple. Let the student's parents or financial backers cooperate with his teacher as fully as possible, or at least to the extent of letting him proceed without constant hindrance. The psychological effect of such cessation from petty complaint and faultfinding would go further than any other influence in hastening the glad day when Mary or John could begin the much-hoped-for career, and the career itself would have a far better chance of life!

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